BETWEEN EXPECTATION AND EXPERIENCE:
Lives of Gujarati and Sikh women ageing in London

Archana Srivastava

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
of the University of London
February 1995

Department of Anthropology and Sociology
School Of Oriental And African Studies

ABSTRACT

This ethnographic study traces the ageing process as conditioned by the migration experience, and the social, economic and cultural backgrounds of Gujarati and Sikh women in London. This research was conducted amongst women of the two communities who frequented various Asian organizations and places of worship in Wood Green, Wembley and Southall in London. The data were collected through unstructured interviews.

The essential experiences which condition the lives of informants include their migratory history, their residential patterns, the perceived threat from western morality, concern for their cultural identity, and actual and perceived racism. These experiences have demanded various adjustments from Indian women, such as the need to go out of their houses to work. They have to face changes in ideas about masculinity, femininity and authority, balancing their expectations (based on the ideal Indian world) with practicalities of life in London. In the absence of wider familial kin networks they need to rely on other strategies of social contact and support. All these changes have affected most women equally, but from time to time, their responses may be guided by their specific religious, regional, caste and linguistic affiliations, or by individual perceptions which are independent of such factors.

This research contributes to the study of the ageing process among first generation women migrants to Britain who are growing old in a western country. It aims to understand their ageing in terms of the conflicts they experience as they adjust their expectations in light of their experience of late twentieth century London. The thesis aims more generally at an understanding of ageing processes of migratory communities living in the West.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge my deep debt and gratitude to my informants who talked to me for hours, answering my questions, and teaching me about various aspects of the life of Indians in Britain (and in Africa). Formal and informal learning through informants and animated discussions with teachers, friends and family members have framed my thoughts on these issues. It is impossible to express my gratitude to all of them adequately in words.

I owe a special debt and gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Lionel Caplan and co-supervisor, Dr. Chris Pinney, who gave me the freedom to formulate and express my own ideas on these problems, questioned my implicit assumptions, offered their valued critical comments and edited previous versions of the thesis, without which this study would have been less satisfactory. The lacunae and faults in the study are entirely due to my own shortcomings. It is their guidance, patience, consideration and support which has provided me the confidence to complete my work.

I also owe special thanks to Dr. Suran Goonatilake, Mrs..Yvonne Craig and Mr. M.T. Sreejan for taking time from their busy schedules to read versions of the final draft. Besides editing, they made several astute comments. Sreejan, Shahrull and Suran have also saved me considerable costs by printing several drafts of this thesis. I thank them very much for this.

I also appreciate the discussions with and useful suggestions made by Prof. Paul Spencer, Dr. Rachel Dwyer and Dr. Werner Menski of the School of Oriental and African Studies, my flat-mate and friend Leena, and Prof. Jain, Prof. Sharma, Prof. Oommen and Dr. Thorat of Jawahar Lal Nehru University in Delhi.

I would like to thank the very helpful staff at the borough libraries that I visited and Gillian Crossby, at the Centre for Policy on Ageing and the various members of the Management Committees and workers at the Asian organizations where I did my fieldwork. They have been extremely supportive.

Special thanks go to my local guardians, Dr. Mathur and his family and Mridu Thanki who introduced me to the Asian Women's Forum, the organization where I began my

fieldwork, in Wood Green, London. I am also most grateful to for the generosity and kindness of my informants, the wonderful food that some of them cooked for me, particularly the very special dishes of their community (e.g Gujarati *Kaḍhī* made by Māsī).

Over the last two years, a very constant support, encouragement, critical and insightful comments have been provided by Sreejan. He has also always endeavoured (and often succeeded) to keep my hopes and spirits up. He has made everything possible. I extend my very sincere thanks to him.

Several friends played a very crucial role in making me feel at home in London, and provided continuous support, encouragement and humour, particularly during tiring and trying moments. I thank very especially, Shahrull and Marion, Sam, Usha and Varsha. My thanks also go to Neeraja, Rachna and Jyoti my friends in Delhi and my cousins, Sangeeta and Sandeep, - distance has made us value even more our friendship/ relationship.

I would like to honour especially the memory of my very dear friend, Shivi, whose faith and steady support gave me strength. His loss is difficult to accept.

My gratitude and thanks also go to the Nehru Centenary British Fellowship and the Charles Wallace India Trust, who provided the funding for this study.

Last but not the least, my unbounded gratitude is expressed to my family who have been a constant source of support, inspiration and encouragement - to my father, mother and brother who have taken an active interest in my work and contributed by their detached and insightful comments.

My being able to come to London is the result of the aspirations and sacrifices of my parents. I dedicate this thesis to them and to the memory of my grandmother whose desire (in 1971 when she passed away) was to see me reach this stage.

Archana Srivastava
5th February, 1995

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

The transliteration of Hindi words is in accordance with McGregor (1977). However the names of persons and places are given in the most commonly used form (e.g Geeta, Sushila, Karanjeet, etc). Sanskritic forms of deities' names have been retained, e.g Rama or Lakshmana.

I have chosen to capitalise West to reflect its status as a social construct in the discourses I have recorded in the thesis.

CORRIGENDA

p. 13: line 5 - `perdominated' read as `predominated'.

p. 24: line 33 - `parctice' read as `practice'.

p. 56, 57, 58: - `Gurudwara' read as `Gurdwara'.

p. 100, 131: - post office `attendant' read as `counter clerk'.

p. 134: f.f. - `Ramgardiah' read as `Ramgariah'.

p .174: line 34 - `palce' read as `place'.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION AND FIELDWORK

CHAPTER II: SETTLING IN LONDON

CHAPTER V:KINSHIP AND SOCIAL NETWORKS OF AGEING GUJARATI AND SIKH WOMEN IN LONDON

CHAPTER VI:AGE, GENDER, RACISM AND GUJARATI AND SIKH WOMEN IN LONDON

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND FIELDWORK

1. Introduction

This is an ethnographic study of women of two Indian communities, namely, Gujaratis and Sikhs, who are living and ageing in London.

The Indian community in London, has had a long tradition of migration and settlement in Britain stretching over two centuries. Indians from all communities and all sectors of life, from slaves to Princes, have migrated and settled in Britain (Visram,1986). However the single largest migration to Britain of Indians has been during 1960-1980 and has largely involved two Indian communities who are known for their migratory habits in India, namely the Gujaratis and Sikhs. Most of them came from fairly low and middle economic classes of the Indian population.

However, as more Indian families have settled in Britain, with fewer having aspirations to return home, the Indian community in Britain has prospered. Many businesses which were established in 1960s-1970s are now profitable. A new breed of professionals has emerged out of the succeeding generation which has taken advantage of the benefits of English education.

In all this, the role and struggles of the (now) elderly, first generation migrants has not been a subject for general social concern. But this study aims to rectify that, and in as much as most of the first generation Indian women belonged to the lower and middle classes, it concentrates upon that particular group of Indian women and their ageing experience.

My informants include women who would be considered "old" not only according to their chronological age, but also those who are "old" according to the Indian *Āśramadharma* (life-cycle) classification that I have used. In this scheme, a woman in the third stage of her life-cycle, which begins with the marriage of her eldest son and the birth of her first grandchild, is considered as "old" (*būṛhī*, in both Gujarati and Punjabi), even though she may only be in her early or mid-40s having married at an

early age. This was usually the practice in villages in Punjab and Gujarat from where most of my informants came. This issue is considered in greater detail in chapter IV. The study therefore focuses upon the day-to-day life of some women belonging to the two Indian communities who are living and ageing in London.

Anthropologists, sociologists, community workers, policy makers, state agencies and government departments have studied various socio-cultural aspects of Indian migrants and some of the problems they have faced in settling in this country. The approach adopted in these studies has evolved from assertion on "race" to that of "ethnicity" (Abner Cohen,1974; Anthony Cohen,1982; Epstein,1978; Royce,1982; Hunt and Walker,1974; Nash,1989; O. Patterson,1982; Wallman,1978). Studies also began to distinguish South Asians as "Indians", "Pakistanis", etc. (D. Witt John,1969; Wright,1968; S. Allen,1978; Dahya,1973; V.S Khan,1979; Heckmann,1983).

However, over the last two decades studies of Indian immigrants have also focused on divisions and distinctions within the Indian community in Britain. Studies by Ballard (1977), Barot (1980), Bhachu (1984), Warrier (1988), Westwood (1988), McDonald (1993) have looked at religious and linguistic divisions within the Indian community in Britain. Tambs-Lyche (1980) and Michaelson (1983) have studied caste distinctions within the Gujarati community and Pettigrew (1972) has studied caste differences among Sikhs in Britain. Ballard (1983) and Bhachu (1984) have stressed the significance of regional distinctions and the patterns of migration for understanding the Indian immigrant populations in Britain.

In all this, scholars have attempted to study the Indian community in terms of the divisions which exist within the community or in terms of the conflict they face vis-a-vis their host, white society. This latter aspect has been the primary focus of government and voluntary sector reports (Romijn,1976; Bhalla and Blakemore,1983; Bhatti,1989; Norman,1985; Patel,1990; Blakemore and Boneham,1994). More recent work has focused on the generational conflicts amongst Indians in Britain (James,1974; C.Ballard,1977; Taylor,1979; Yates,1990). However these studies privilege the perspective of the younger generation. The 1978 report of the Commission for Racial Equality, titled Between two Cultures, also adopts a similar perspective. There has been a serious absence of voices of the older generation. The majority of studies of the Indian elderly are concerned with questions of social policy and typically study the Indian

elderly in terms of the "Double Jeopardy" of age and race, or in terms of the "Triple Jeopardy" of age, race and sex.

Also, in most studies on Indian elderly and social policy reports (Boneham,1976; Bhalla,1981; Blakemore,1985; Norman,1985; Patel,1990; Blakemore and Boneham,1994) the pathology model has perdominated, in which elderly people are seen in terms of disease, disability, poverty, bereavement, isolation and role loss (Arber and Ginn,1991:18). None of the studies or reports have probed deeper into the causal roots of e.g. conflicts and isolation experienced by the elderly people and have in their limited scope completely ignored the efforts made by the elderly people themselves to cope with the problems in their later life. My present study is therefore poised at this stage.

During the course of my interviews with elderly Indian women, the source of their conflict emerged as also a clash of expectations which are often based on what is perceived as "Indian ideal" and their experiences of living in a western country.

It is around this conflict and how they cope with it, that I develop my understanding of the lives of Gujarati and Sikh women ageing in London.

This chapter is designed to indicate the way in which I approached the area of my research, the manner of my introduction to the Indian community, and my selection of the sample. I then outline my theoretical premises and subsidiary themes, describe my actual fieldwork and conclude with a brief summary of my central arguments as they are explored and developed in the various chapters of the thesis.

1.1. Preliminary Fieldwork

Through my family contacts, on arrival in London in 1990 I was invited to a friend's home for a *Satyanārāyaṇ Kathā* (Hindu religious worship) which was organized as a thanks-giving to God for their eldest son who had passed his MBBS examination. This family was my first Indian contact in the U.K, but I met several other Indian families who came for the *Kathā*.

In talking about some of my research findings in the field with this family, I have been

able to identify areas of "Indianness" and distinguish them from "Gujaratiness" and "Sikhness". This family through their contacts have also been able to show me the importance of "class" (as most of their contacts were professionals also). This will be discussed in my study.

I had seen this *Kathā* being performed in my family in India so I was familiar with the necessary details that go into setting up the *pūjā sthal* (place of worship) etc. I was surprised to see that my hosts had all the *sāmagrī* (items needed for the worship). The *Pandit* who came to perform the ceremony was an excellent *Pandit* in terms of the attention he gave to the details of the *puja* and the patience with which he explained all the *vidhiyāṁ* (rites) that he was performing to the people present. He first spoke in Sanskrit and then explained in English. The *pūjā* was followed by *Praṣād* (offerings made to the God and then distributed among the devotees after the prayer) and a vegetarian dinner. I was impressed and was told that I will see a lot more of this as all the Indian families take great pride in keeping "Indian traditions".

This experience made me realise that observing the differences and similarities to the Indian life I was used to in India would be a useful study. This comparison held dangers of subjectivity but my approach has been to strive for objectivity in my research. Therefore I chose to study Gujarati and Sikh women, groups to which I do not belong. Yet there have been problems as I was not allowed to remain an outsider at all times. I was an "unmarried" "Indian" "girl" living "alone" in "London" - all attributes which were problematic in my fieldwork. One standard question which some women asked me was whether I had any relatives in London. Following my negative response, I was made the subject of their "protection" and instant invitations to their homes for various functions and to stay there. While this gave me easy access to observe Indian families in London more closely, it also created problems. Firstly, my time for fieldwork analysis was minimised, and, secondly, some women began planning a marriage for me. So I had to be selective about the families I visited. This was a necessary compromise in my participant observation research, so that I stayed in a suitable University accommodation in Central London and resorted to what Vertovec has called "commuter ethnography" (1991:7) travelling almost daily for a year to my field work area and families.

A student colleague who had previously been a part-time worker at the Asian Women's

Forum in Wood Green, north London, suggested that the best way to make contacts with the Gujarati and Sikh communities in London was to go to their various social organizations in London. So I first visited the organization where she had worked.

The Asian Women's Forum is situated in the Wood Green shopping complex. It is primarily used by Gujarati women living in the area. I asked the workers there if I could make regular visits to meet their members in the hope of beginning my fieldwork there in about six months time. I was asked to put in a formal request to the Management Committee of the Forum. They approved and my informal fieldwork began. At that point I had not decided on specific issues for the research, so I just observed the interaction among various women coming to the organization, and talked to them generally. Meanwhile the workers at the Forum told me about two other local organizations in the area - the Asian Centre, and Roshni. While the Asian Centre had membership open to both Asian men and women, Roshni was open only to Asian women. Since Wood Green and its surrounding areas were settled predominantly by Gujaratis and Bangladeshis (among the South Asian communities), all three organizations were mostly frequented by members of these two communities.

It was a worker at Roshni who told me that for predominently Sikh organizations I must go to Southall. I was told about organizations like Milap - Day Centre for the elderly, the Southall Monitoring Group and the Southall Black Sisters.

Meanwhile a Sikh friend introduced me to a Sikh family in Southall with whom he was a boarder. Their family members became my prime Sikh informants on the life of Sikhs in Southall and in London generally. They took me to the Havelock Road Gurdwara, another place where I did my fieldwork on Sikhs.

Thus, through fairly regular visits to these places, I was gradually exposed to the lives of Gujaratis and Sikhs in London (For maps of India, Gujarat, Punjab and Africa showing major states and cities where migrants come from, see Appendices A-D).

However I may also mention at this point the two reasons for choosing to focus on "women" in my study. Firstly, the first organization I approached with intentions of fieldwork was a woman's organization. I found the atmosphere at the organization and more particularly the women who visited the organization very friendly. Most of them

seemed keen to talk and I developed a fairly close relationship with them in a short time.

Secondly, the fact that in the Asian Centre and Milap that I visited during my preliminary fieldwork period, talking to men was not easy, because of my sex or age or possibly both. But here also the women were very friendly and keen to talk. Even though I was much younger than the women who came to these organizations, it was easy to talk. Oakley has mentioned the importance of "sisterhood" saying that it can provide a vehicle to overcome inequalities (such as, in my case - age) between the interviewer and interviewee. Oakley appealed to what was common to women and to their life experiences in building relationships with the women she interviewed (1981:33).

1.2. Theoretical Premises

Bond, Briggs and Coleman in talking of the role of theory in the study of ageing write, "when theory is used, as in psychological or sociological [or anthropological] theory, then it refers to a set of conjectures or tentative explanations of reality....To do this we use selected concepts and relationships between them" (1993:18). Likewise, my theoretical understanding and usage in this work refers to a tentative explanation of reality by using the concepts of expectation and experience - as I obesrved and as was repoted by the women of my study.

The women interviewed were no longer under the illusion that they would go back to India to live the rest of their lives among family, friends and familiar surroundings, or that they would die in India. Although there is no "myth of return", there is the "mythification of the desire to return", i.e although in conversation the impracticality of return often becomes apparent there is nevertheless an immensely strong attachment to the possibility of return.

Therefore the word "mythification" is used to show that, though women mention the longing to go back home, they also acknowledge the problems and limitations of the fulfilment of their desire. As one informant said, "even if I return to India, I will not be very happy for long because I will miss my children and my grandchildren who are all here".

However this knowledge is usually not sufficient to stop them from feeling this desire to return home. They romanticise and idealize life at home - and this serves as an escape for women who are not very happy with their life in London, and who worry about growing old or dying in a foreign country.

This romanticisation of home nurtures their local expectations and accounts for a large part of their suffering as these expectations are compared to their experiences of life in Britain. The older a woman becomes, the greater grows the tension between her expectations and the experiences of her practical life. This study explores this tension.

Older women have more time to think of their past life in the remembered and idealised home, they are anxious about their future in an alien country and have fewer resources to face the daily challenges thrown up by life in London. Thus they escape in romanticisation and rememberance of their life "back home".

Vatuk notes a similar tension: "there is considerable evidence in the literature that the reality is much less agreeable than the ideal. This is one area which, to my mind, should be emphasised in future investigations of the role of the aged in India" (1990a:100). The tension between the ideal and reality in the lives of ageing Gujarati and Sikh women is the central theoretical concern of this thesis.

We may ask at this point, do older women rely on traditions only because they use them as an escape mechanism from their problems in old age? The answer appears to be negative. There are three reasons for this.

Firstly, it is important to affirm traditions because they are linked with notions of "identity" in a foreign country. This makes it difficult for women to be seen to give up their traditional teachings and expectations in favour of western life.

Traditions are also important to maintain because the first generation migrants still believe that they may return to India, and they will not be accepted at home if they are seen to have succumbed to western ways. In India, while the "foreign returned" are seen with awe and respect (particularly in villages) as having been to a developed country, adoption of western habits or dress (particularly by women) is scorned and seen as marks of a western morality.

These judgements have become less meaningful in the changing India of today. However, in the 1970s and 1980s they were taken more seriously, particularly in villages of Gujarat and Punjab where most of the informants came from.

Also, to be seen as closer to traditions which are part of "home" (India) is particularly comforting for older women as it brings them closer to home and the familiar. But tensions arise when the world of traditional values and expectation that a woman creates is rendered impractical within the constraints of modernization, urbanization, industrialization and westernization which exist in London. This study examines how Indian women appear caught in the conflict of trying to adjust their expectations to their experiences of reality around them.

Vatuk had raised a similar question in her earlier work while analysing the family life of older people in a changing Indian society but had not been able to look at the relationship between the two (1982:79).

Khan, too, has not been able to consider this issue in detail though she writes, "the older generation itself is in transition, coping with structural and emotional alterations of its traditional frame of reference which is also undermining or confusing traditional values" (1980:82). The question is, what is the nature of this confusion or struggle?

As explained by Neugarten and Hagestad (1976) age expectations are experienced as social forces external to the individual. Conformity to them is ensured through a variety of social mechanisms, the "prods" and "breaks" which keep the individual to the predetermined path. Also, as Jerrome points out, "a fairly rigid programme of age roles regulates behaviour through the life span, upheld by a system of socialization and social control" (1992:6). Given this, a woman possibly has to de-socialize herself in her ageing years as she is exposed to a different cultural milieu and therefore experiences a reality which is contrary to much of her traditional knowledge and social training, a task which is more difficult for Indian women who migrate to London in their advanced years with little or no exposure to urban life-style.

This tension between the expectation and experience expresses itself in various aspects of womens' lives, be it work inside the home or employment outside, interaction with

close family members, wider kin, neighbours, or British society at large.

Therefore the theoretical questions raised are: how do women cope with this tension? What do they do to relieve it? What are their choices and alternatives? Is there a particular group of women who are more vulnerable to this tension, or, alternatively are better able to resolve it than others?

On a more generalised theoretical level the question this raises is: does this conflict have aspects which make it general enough to be applicable to most immigrant women who are ageing in a western country?

While this theoretical concern guides the thesis, several other important theoretical constructs and themes emerge which are either questioned or supplemented by my research. These are: (1) the role of reminiscence in the process of ageing, (2) the "activity" versus the "disengagement" theory of ageing, (3) the "culture of complaint", (4) British versus Indian notions of ageing and gender, (5) the notion of *suḥkh* (happiness) and *duḥkh* (sadness) and (6) the life-course versus life-text theory of ageing.

The thesis also stresses the importance of "self-perception" and "context" in an anthropological analysis.

1.3. Themes, Concepts and Questions

1.3a. Indian "classical" view of ageing

Because I was dealing with an Indian population in my study, I decided to also use the Indian method of classifying age (*Āśramdharma*) rather than only the commonly used chronological classification.

For Indians, two classical religious texts, the *Rig Veda* and *Manu Smriti* (1st century B.C to 1st century A.D) prescribe the life course divisions and consequent rules, norms, roles and obligations to be followed and performed by each age group (*Varnāśramadharma).* Accordingly, personal life is divided into four stages, identified as celibate studenthood (*brahmacāriṅ*), householder (*grahastha*), hermit (*vānaprastha*) and wandering ascetic (*yāti/sanyās*) (Manu Smrit,II-IV Quoted in Motwani,1958:137).

These divisions pose an academic problem as to which "age" is to be taken as a marker of various life stages or the beginning of old age, in terms of generational age or chronological age, etc (Foner,1984:3-25). Yet to an Indian mind this does not appear problematic. One thinks of age not in terms of years but changes in roles and duties which come with having stepped into a definite stage of the life cycle. For example, according to Manu, "as soon as a householder observes the birth of his grand-son or when his hair turns grey, the householder should distribute his property among his children and with or without his wife renounce the world and enter the forest in order to undertake the prescribed tasks of the third order (*vānaprastha*)" (Manu Smriti VI:2 Quoted in Kuppuswamy,1977:93). The locus of the family shifts from the parents to the young couple who will conceive and begin a family. Then, they are gradually to wean themselves away from love of their family and mundane affairs, and channel their energies and interests towards the spiritual life.

The aged are to be looked upon as having led an exemplary life, keeping themselves to traditions and norms and values of the society. Having passed these on to their children, they are to live in peace, and at most, care and pamper the grandchildren, leaving the right of socialization of the young to their parents. With each passing year, the aged are to recede further away from all ties and active participation in worldly affairs, and to foster an increasing closeness with God, hence causing no tension or disturbance to the young family members within the household.

This is the *Brahamanic* view and is directly relevant for only the twice-born (higher) castes in India (Dumont,1960:43-51). Members of the servile (*Śudra*) castes and women of all castes do not come under its purview. Srinivas Tilak explains the crucial absence of women from this scheme:

> The apparent absence of women from the age-homogeneous organization may be attributed to the practice of integrating women into domestic and familial roles. The kinship ties affecting women are designed to stress vertical family bonds rather than the horizontal bonds of age...It is for these reasons that women who are expected to stay within the domestic sphere, therefore, are also less likely to participate in formal age groups such as that of the student, hermit, or the ascetic wherein men's lives and duties would be played out in the public arena and where principles other than kinship would operate. Aging, therefore, does not seem to have had the same meaning or involved the same circumstances for men as for women (1989:39).

Contrary to such suggestions, and this was confirmed by my own fieldwork women nonetheless use this ideal as much as men to refer to their life stages and the duties associated with each stage. Sikhs, whose religion denounces the caste system and various other principles of Hinduism (possibly under the all-pervasive influence of Hinduism in India), are equally familiar with this classification and use it as much as the Hindus. Men and women from all castes in my sample talked about the various stages and referred to them in the course of their daily life. In view of this I would argue that it is still justifiable to use the *Āśramadharma* classification for all castes and both sexes as I did in my study of the women from both Gujarati and Sikh communities.

Vatuk, in her study, writes,

> In this community (Delhi) old and young alike were heard to employ the sanskrit labels - or their Hindi vernacular equivalents - for the classical four stages of life as they talked about either the life course or the ageing process and adaptation to old age. Old men are particularly prone to characterize themselves as Renouncers, though the context usually makes clear their reference to a state of mind rather than to their actual or intended physical departure from home (1990b:74).

She quotes one informant as saying,

> after turning everything to my son I said to myself, let me leave everything and take sanyas. Yes, while continuing to live at home, I am as if in the Renouncer stage of life (1990b:74).

The same was seen in this study, for when men talk about renouncing they have little to renounce in the family as their domain is usually seen to belong to the outside world. But a woman, whose domain is traditionally confined to the house, has a lot to lose when she gets to that stage. Therefore, for her, ageing and renunciation are more difficult and crucial. What compensates for the loss is perhaps the attractiveness of the idea of care, service, love and respect that she would be entitled to during this stage.

Referring to this idea but hinting at how women resist attempts at renunciation, i.e the difference between the traditional ideal and what is to be found at the practical level, Vatuk writes,

> To leave Grahastha involves two aspects: first, a readiness on the part of the Bahu (daughter-in-law) to take over the onerous household tasks

> formerly performed by the saas (mother-in-law with the indifferent assistance of her daughters), and second, a readiness on the part of the older woman to give up her managerial role and a feeling that she alone is responsible for and capable of managing household affairs. These two rarely coincide. While the former is generally accomplished within a week or two of the new daughter-in-law's arrival, the latter is, typically, a very gradual process of withdrawal that may take many years and may never be completed before the senior woman's death. The symbolic act of `handing over the keys' to the daughter-in-law is usually resisted up to the end. In fact, although elderly women are usually often chided, and, chide one another, for being `too much bound up in Grahastha', it is actually rare in this community for any woman to voluntarily cease taking some responsibility for the work of the household and its organization until she is either mentally or physically quite incapable of doing so (1975:155).

Therefore while women resist renunciation and its concomitant notion of ageing, they are keen to assert the other part of the ideal which prescribes love, care and respect for the elderly. And if they are denied that, then they register complaints and disappointment against their children, particularly sons and their wives.

Chapters III and IV will examine this view. But what will also be of particular interest is the notion of renunciation for women who had been working outside their homes and therefore were not confined to the domestic sphere. Were they as happy as most Indian men in talking about and pursuing renunciations?

I found the classification useful at a more practical level. I agree with Tilak that,

> Despite their unique identities, the stages of life and the associated values, goals and duties are not mutually inconsistent....The emphasis, however, is on the universal typology of growth and development taking place simultaneously with advancing age rather than on individualized and particularized aspects of aging and development....life events are to be understood as components of an organized complexity rather than as specific causes. Events in a particular life are important, but examination of them in isolation will not explain the nature of aging; one must focus on the underlying human structure in which individual life events are reflected (1989;44).

This classification facilitated a dynamic approach that moved back and forth in time during analysis of aspects of life and relationships, thereby reflecting continuity in the ageing process.

Before proceeding to see how ageing is regarded and experienced by my informants, it

is useful to note the ways in which ageing as a phenomenon has been viewed conceptually. These conceptual constructions of ageing are restricted to the purpose of this study, and do not include all the discourses in the area.

1.3b. Conceptual constructions of ageing

Ageing implies a "process" of continuous chronological advancement, matched by a decline of many abilities, the most visible of which are the physical capacities of a person (eyesight, hearing, memory, ability for hard work etc.). Hence, this decline directly affects a person's active participation in social, cultural and economic life. Scholars have referred to this and explained it in terms of their theories of "disengagement". Opposed to their arguments, other scholars have proposed theories of "activity".

The disengagement theory, according to Cumming and Henry (1961) "appears to refer to a more terminal stage, and views old age as a natural process of withdrawal, a transition from active participation in life to passive decline and adjustment to the approach of death" (Quoted in Spencer,1990:23). According to Shahnas and Townsend, who quote from Cumming, the disengagement theory suggests an "ultimate biological basis for reduction of interest or involvement in the environment"(1968:5). They go on to suggest that "whether disengagement is initiated by the society or by the ageing person, in the end the old person plays fewer roles and his or her relationships have changed their quality. Disengagement then reflects a triple withdrawal - a loss of roles, a limitation of social contacts and relationships, and a much smaller commitment to social norms and values" (1968:5). (See also Rosow,1976; Johnson,1976; Kart,1987).

According to Cavan (1949) "activity theory may be regarded as a precursor of life crises theory applied to the onset of old age. It argues that people seek to continue their patterns of interaction as they age and only adapt to alternative roles when old ones can no longer be maintained" (Quoted in Spencer,1990:23). Spencer points out that "more recent writers have identified strategies that the elderly can pursue to maintain an active role: they construct their own old age according to their abilities and within the cultural framework of opportunity and choice" (1990:23) or, as this study will show, in view of their limitations and perceptions.

While it is easy to understand a woman's response to ageing in light of her limitations, opportunities and choices which are "objective" characteristics, a large part of her response is based upon perceptions which, as "subjective" criteria are difficult to assess. The closest one comes to understanding them is by trying to identify objective characteristics in those responses, i.e whether based upon religious philosophies, cultural socialization, individual personality or past experiences. Often it may be a combination of more than one or all these factors, as much of this study will show.

Thus a lot depends upon individual perceptions which are seen to guide their attitude and approach to ageing. Shahnas and Townsend are perhaps implying this when they write,

> Insufficient attention may have been given to forms of compensation, replacement and substitution when there are losses of roles and relationships in old age as at other times of life. Widowed people remarry or join their married children or develop more intensive relationships with one or more of their children. They begin to spend more time with the neighbours. *Extensive* social interaction may be gradually replaced by *intensive* local social interaction, involving fewer people. Loss of roles may heighten the subjective importance, and increase the effectiveness of execution, of those roles that remain (1968:5).

A similar argument has characterised theories of "Non Isolation" and "Integration" as opposed to "Isolation" and "Segregation".

Featherstone and Hepworth (1990) point out that status [of the aged] depends on societal perceptions of the value of the roles performed at different ages; and this varies in different cultures and over time. Thus they bring in the important dimension of the "social view" of old people/aged, Arber and Ginn interpret these "social views" as based on stereotypes (1991:33). In fact, they link ageism, to the "process of systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people because they are old" (Lewis and Butler, 1972:223, Quoted in Arber and Ginn, 1991:34). They further point out the dangers of such stereotyping, when it extends beyond people's attitudes to being institutionalised , e.g. in the age segregation policies, which they write "contribute to the view of elderly people as socially redundant, incapable and dependent. In this process we can see the interplay of parctice and attitudes, material reality and ideology" (1991:34).

This shows the ambivalence of approaches to the process of ageing. While some scholars view the ageing population as becoming disengaged, isolated or segregated from other age groups within the family or society, other scholars see them being involved and integrated. Although the nature or form of such involvement or integration may be different at this stage of their life.

These diverse approaches reflect the heterogeneity or diversity found in the process of ageing itself. And the basis of this diversity can be related to the socio-cultural backgrounds of the ageing population, its class positions, sex, levels of education, as well as individual attitudes towards ageing.

However, ageing also reveals homogeneity at various levels. Ageing as a process involves "age grades". Certain ages are taken as markers of various stages of the life course or ageing process of individuals. Each "age grade" is taken to be a homogenous whole in terms of the rules and norms prescribed, the obligations and attitudes expected, and the status conferred on the members. Radcliffe-Brown has used the term "age grade" in this way and Fry writes,

> Life is not ordered by minutiae, but is cut into larger divisions we call life stages or age grades. Radcliffe-Brown, who so long ago (1929) coined the term "age grade" as recognised divisions of life from infancy to old age, was clarifying a terminological problem in the study of age organisations. For analytic purposes, he was differentiating between highly formalised age organisations such as age sets and generation sets, and informal age systems. The former have explicit rules in recruiting and establishing social boundaries between groups. The latter, on the other hand, are less precise and are found in all societies, approximately grading their members by age or life stage (1990:143).

This, of course, is in ideal cultural terms, for, as Eisenstadt points out, "a cultural definition of an age grade or age span is always a broad definition of human potentialities and obligations at a given stage of life. It is not a prescription or expectation of a detailed role, but a general, basic role disposition into which more specific roles may be built, and to which they may be ascribed" (1956:22). In my research I have classified the occupants of each "age grade" as a group, because, "ideally" they are to be guided by similar rules, norms and obligations in society. However, while explaining the role of rules and norms in relation to ageing, Spencer writes, "the notion of a general awareness of age expectations does not appear to be in question. But this is not matched by evidence of rigid timetable of age norms and

constraints. Cultures vary and there is very often a considerable flexibility which may vary over the life course, sometimes increasing with age" (1990:17).

Spencer also explains the above argument in terms of the difference between the "Life Course" and the "Life Text". He suggests that,

> Instead of the life course as a cognitive timetable of expectations one might substitute the concept of a "life text": a notional ordering of events and broad trends in the life course that acquires meaning in the way in which it is interpreted by each individual"(1990:19-20).

His analysis therefore introduces a dynamic conceptualization of the process of ageing.

I find this a particularly useful distinction, and in this research I use this analysis to show how the members of an age group do not always behave according to the "social given", but can interpret and act according to the context in which they are placed.

A common distinction is made in terms of personal interaction patterns on formal and informal occasions or in public and private domains. Importance is also given to the background and the present position, i.e "context" of the ageing population. Hence factors such as migration, urbanisation, industrialisation or, referring to women specifically, whether they are housewives or employed, etc., become important.

In this respect "Double Jeopardy", and "Triple Jeopardy" theories are relevant. The latter, advanced by Palmore and Manten (1974), added sexism to the previous Double Jeopardy model of a two-fold handicap of "Age" and "Race", proposed by the National Urban League in 1964. A number of studies followed this, Jackson (1980), Hendricks and Hendricks (1981) and Dowd and Bengston (1978). Recently, Norman (1985) in her book Triple Jeopardy: growing old in a second homeland has used this term to explain that the immigrant elderly are not in jeopardy only because of age, race and gender, but because of the physical conditions and hostility under which they live, and because services are not accessible to them (1985:1). Thus Norman introduces an important dimension of the role of social policies in aiding or alleviating jeopardies. However writers such as Kent (1971), Cool (1981) and Holzberg (1982) have suggested that racial disadvantages disappear because the joint family acts as a medium for social interaction. Sub-cultures can support and grant esteem to aged members. The contrast between the two sets of theories is examined in my research in terms of the Indian

experience in Britain with a particular emphasis on the role of Indian joint families and the traditional esteemed position of the elderly within the Indian families in light of their ethnic experience in Britain.

Functionalists assumed that a person occupies a place in society and, as such, contributes to maintaining the social system. The obvious way to do this is to perform faithfully one's roles and obligations and also to make sure that the young are socialised properly into their roles and obligations at various stages of their lives. Hence aged persons are responsible for "continuing" the values and traditions of their society. They are seen as a "link" between the past and the future and as repositories of past traditional wisdom and experience.

Neugarten writes, "as repositories of tradition they are living symbols of the continuity and endurance of culture and ultimate truths" (1969:123). In a more general sense Connerton, in his work on How Societies Remember (1989), writes about the role of commemorative ceremonies in forging a link between past and present through generations, which are also therefore responsible for maintaining social stability and equilibrium.

However such roles and expectations are open to confrontation in a world where oral tradition is being replaced by the visual culture of video films. This widely perceived decay of "traditional culture" is explored in chapter IV. This therefore is seen to pose problems to the traditional role and expectations of the elderly as repositors and promoters of traditional wisdom and culture.

Kakar and Erikson propose a psycho-social view, seeing human development as a continuum, wherein each phase of life presents a crisis: "the relative solution of each is the source of psycho-social strength which is both the individual's heritage and contribution to the succession of generations"(1979:2). This suggests that irrespective of their personal characteristics, the aged must be "respected" by the succeeding generations, and are seen to occupy a higher status. All this ignores inter-generational conflict, which is much visible in some societies. And as we have pointed out above, where traditional expectations of an older generation are being ignored by the younger generation.

Eisenstadt, however, does acknowledge it and explains that,

> the relations between different age grades are necessarily asymmetrical from the point of view of authority, respect and initiative. The elder age grades usually exert some authority over the younger ones, they can divert, formally or informally, their activities and command their respect. This basic asymmetry of power and authority is characteristic of the interaction between different age grades and generations as a whole. It may be somewhat informal, as in cases of people with small age differences and in other cases it may be formalised and officially prescribed. But it constitutes a very important element in the relations between various age grades and emphasises the complementariness of age images and expectations. The strong emphasis on the respect due to elder people, is as we have already seen, a basic pre-requisite for the successful maintenance of social continuity" (1956:29-30).

This view was contested by some scholars who argued that with modernisation, the aged lose their status. Cogwill and Holmes (1972) in a cross-cultural study showed that the loss of status is a product of industrial society. New ideas and technologies and greater mobility and longevity, they argued, have undermined traditional attitudes, shifting the initiative towards younger people. According to Stone (1977) these changes are an indication of the growth of egalitarianism or individualism rather than the lowering of respect for older people per se. Spencer writes, "the concentration of interest in the theory reflects an increasing awareness of the dilemma of old age with the increasing privacy of the nuclear family and the attenuation of responsibility towards more distant kin" (Spencer,1990:26). However, questioning this theory, Nancy Foner (1984:197-204) has pointed to the diversity of responses to modernisation that makes generalisation virtually impossible. Fischer (1978) has pointed to the declining influence and power in relation to older people in pre-industrial times. A further criticism of modernisation theory is that the recent loss of status primarily involves the public sphere and property, both of which are in the male domain, and it has affected women only to a lesser extent (Van Arsdale, 1981:121; Sinclair, 1985:27-9). Unlike male skills, those that are passed on within the family are not outmoded by the pace of change, and this is reflected in a "matrifocal tilt" in modern families, except in so far as increasing mobility may have separated women from their offspring (Hagestad, 1985:150; Abendstern, 1986:12-3 Quoted in Spencer,1990:26-27).

These views are examined in Chapters III and IV of the thesis - particularly in light of increasing female employment as a result of which the strict separation between the domestic sphere of women and the public sphere of men no longer holds true.

These questions recur throughout this research. However there are other theoretical constructs and themes which inform the thesis, as now noted briefly.

1.3c. Importance of reminiscence in the ageing process

> They live by memory rather than by hope
> for what is left to them of life
> is but little compared to the long past.

So says Aristotle (Treatise on Rhetoric) (1959), and I found this to be true among my informants.

But unlike Aristotle who opposes reminiscence to hope, many of my informants still remained hopeful. Even though they seemed fatalistic, or left a lot to "God's will", there was still the hope that "things may be better", and that "God will one day reward us for the sufferings in our life".

However, as Bornat has pointed out, Cicero, the Roman orator, politician and writer at the end of the Republican period who devoted a long essay on the subject of old age wrote: "Reminiscence is a positive asset. Far from being a sign of inability to move with the times, the past provides useful lessons" (1994:10) (See also Laslett, 1984:379-89). This may be quite true but reminiscence is confused with "ruminating", as I found frequently with my informants. Lieberman and Tobin (1983), drawing a distinction between the two, write that "the very term "reminiscence" itself has positive connotations, of recall of pleasurable events, as against the "ruminating" which may characterize a life-review".

This is a useful distinction and tells us that reminiscence reminds people of "happy" times and thus gives them pleasure. But one must not discount the importance of rumination, for it is actually through this process of life-review that "lessons" are learned for the present and future.

While many of my informants indulged in reminiscence, many more ruminated on their life. Many, while doing so cried when referring to their painful past. My concern about this uncomfortable aspect of my research was modified by organizational workers who

said that such talk was therapeutic and beneficial. More detailed responses will be discussed in the following chapters.

Chapter II of the thesis may itself be described as an exercise in rumination. It gives the partial autobiographical details of some of my informants' lives but mainly allows them to speak almost non-stop about their life until coming to London. On analysis one can see how their past life has affected or informed their present life, and is shaping their future hopes and desires.

Nowadays, reminiscence is widely accepted as having personal, psychological significance for an ageing person. "To have a voice and the opportunity for genuine self-expression, gives one a sense of control over life" (Coleman,1994:14). According to Butler (1963) life-review is a normative process which all people undergo as they realise their life is coming to an end. Lewis (1971) subscribes to Butler's view and calls life-review a "defense mechanism against the vicissitudes of ageing" (1971:243). McMohan and Rudick (1964), who studied the veterans of the Spanish American war, saw a connection between the high rate of reminiscence among those men and their health and mental adjustment. They pointed out the importance of reminiscence in maintaining a sense of identity and self-esteem (Bornat,1994:14).

Bornat makes a further distinction between what he calls life-review and self-preservation approaches to understanding reminiscence. He says,

> Both have a concern with a person's sense of identity. Whereas the latter focuses on the maintenance of worth and value in circumstances of life which may have changed drastically, the former addresses the question of the formation of an acceptable identity with which to face death. The first is directed to challenges arising from present conditions, the second to challenges from the contents of past memories themselves. This distinction is important because such differently motivated reminiscences may require quite different responses from the listener (Bornat,1994:14).

While this distinction is largely valid and true, in my study I found life-review and self-preservation to be generally united. In many cases my informant's life has been a story of self-preservation as a member of a minority, or as a migrant going from one continent to another, eventually to contemplate death in an alien country surrounded by children and grandchildren who (at times) represent alien (western) values. In these cases life-

reviews are painful to recount and equally painful to hear. Their therapeutic value is difficult to assess.

But besides having practical and psychological use Coleman has pointed out their social value. He quotes Abbs (1983) who says, "The most valuable reminiscence, [is] like the best autobiography....in telling the story of our lives we describe above all our commitments, that which has given our life value"and as Jerome Burner (1991) has noted, it is for this reason that"telling one's story involves the construction of one's culture not only of one's self" (Coleman,1994:20). This will be illustrated in Chapter II and subsequent Chapters of the thesis.

1.3d. Indian views on Gender and Age

Many aged Indians have caricatured view of the West as a source of moral degeneration. This constitutes a form of "Occidentalism" akin to the phenomenon of "Orientalism" described by Said (1978:2). While some aged Indians evaluate the West positively as standing for "development", "modernization", "urbanization", "greater and actual freedom of thought and expression", many more look down upon the West for its "perceived lack of commitment to the family, of care, including smoking and drinking alcohol, open sexuality of the society, the acceptance of living together and having children outside marriage, and the lack of religious values and practice" (McDonald,1993:146). Though McDonald uses the word "English" culture it can as well be applied to mean "western" culture - as was accepted by the Indian informants. They quite openly and freely use the words, *Aṁgrez* (English); *videśī sabhyatā* (literally translated it means "foreign culture", which in effect means "western culture" or "culture of the whites", because usually the countries listed under this rubric were America, England, Europe and Australia). This also explains why many use the word *gore* (white) to mean English or all westerners.

The general stereotypical way of viewing western culture also feeds into the culturally specific notions of viewing gender and age. As this study focuses on elderly women, culturally constructed notions of femininity and old age among women are now considered.

Discussions on femininity in the literature have primarily concentrated on issues of

power and subordination (Ortner and Whitehead, 1981; Moore, 1988). While most South Asian women live their lives under constraints, they clearly negotiate within their constraints to their advantage (see Caplan, 1987; Sharma, 1980; Jeffery, 1979). Lynn Bennett (1983), who studied higher caste women in Nepal, and Vatuk (1987) who studied higher caste women in India, mention the importance of a woman's position in the domestic cycle (daughter, sister, mother, widow, etc) and her age in determining her status and position within the household. Thus women do not occupy a low position vis-a-vis men in the household at all times.

This introduces the importance of culturally specific notions of femininity, e.g. a certain specific behaviour is considered "right" for an Indian woman depending on the particular stage of her life-cycle. This behaviour is defined, and a girl is socialized accordingly. Any deviations are considered morally wrong and at times punishable. Some words or actions that define a woman's moral world are: *izzat* (honour), *śaram* (shame), *sevā* (care, service). A word often used with *sevā* is *dharma* (literally translated as religion, but here meaning moral duty) - implying therefore that service for a woman is her moral duty.

However often words which define a woman's world also partially define a man's world, e.g. *seva* is also a part of man's moral world. In the Indian culture to which my informants would subscribe it is the duty of the eldest son to take care of his elderly parents, and this in no way undercuts his masculinity. But whereas all women have a moral duty to serve everybody, only the eldest son is morally bound to serve his parents while other men are free of this moral obligation.

The rules of conduct are quite clearly laid down and what I am concerned with is how some of these major rules which are supposed to guide an Indian woman's behaviour are manipulated and changed in London, where most women had to work either willingly or through economic necessity. In either case an Indian woman's working status outside the house in a western country is seen to pose threats to the Indian or eastern notions of femininity, and moral duties and values attached to it, as she becomes exposed to the western values and morality of the society at her work place. She may therefore bring these back to her family and into her relationships, particularly those with men. So what is expected of her? Does social reality allow her to remain loyal to the expectations of her family?

Of particular interest is another dimension to this issue - a woman's own notion of her femininity. Has that undergone any change through her interaction and exposure with western society?

The culturally constructed notions of age introduced earlier noted the extent to which women's age is a consideration, in the Indian tradition. However elderly people (*buzurg*) are "to be respected" and cared for by their children. Even though in Hindu tradition a woman's status is quite low in the family, the same tradition allows a higher status to women as mothers, as grandmothers or as widows. According to Bennett (1983) and Vatuk (1987) this is because a woman in these life stages is considered an a-sexual being, and therefore no threat to the family's honour. Thus she can be respected, the same reason why sisters or daughters are respected in the tradition.

Children in India grow up with the knowledge that they (in particular the sons) have to take care of their old parents. Vatuk in her study of migrants in Delhi says that "children in India grow up with the feeling of reciprocating to the parents the care and love which was bestowed upon them in their childhood, or they would suffer a sense of sin and guilt" (1990b:65-69). Alternatively, "good care of their parents in their later years earns children *punya* (blessings)" (Jain and Menon,1991:26). Thus, according to Indian tradition, an elderly person is respected as well as receiving care. In the case of a widowed and dependent mother, her son and daughter-in-law have a greater responsibility in assuring her of their care and security. What happens, then, when a son is forced to move to another town because of his job? Or what happens when a son has to move out of his parents' house because the house is too small for his growing family? Or what happens if the son's wife and his mother disagree and the son decides to move out with his wife to keep peace in the family? What factors affect these choices in a western country? Does he get blamed for having been influenced by the West with its lack of family commitments and respect for the elderly people? Does he experience guilt towards both parties? What happens to an elderly woman's sense of security in her old age? What options of security does she have? Do organizations like the old peoples' homes or social security benefits, play a role in easing or increasing her sense of insecurity? What other options does she have as a dependent minority (Indian) woman growing old in a foreign country? These are some other issues which this thesis explores

1.3e. Race and Ethnicity in Britain

Britain today is increasingly seen as a culturally and socially plural society. Post-war Britain offered a home to many new immigrants (Visram,1986). Their numbers and diversity kept multiplying, and in 1971 Britain received a large influx of Asians from East Africa. At this time Britain's pluralism became more visible, while at the same time putting it on the political agenda (Lynch,1989:29). This sudden large influx of migrants with their families spurred the British government into imposing strict laws on future immigration. Regulations have increased over the years and many migrant families have known separation because of this. They have perceived these laws as racist because they apply only to the immigrants from Third World countries. This raises the issue of the relation between race and immigration in Britain.

My informants primarily came from the lower and middle classes, and experienced racism as a painful social reality. When I began interviewing and said that I was interested in the lives of Indians in Britain I was usually barraged by personal experiences of racism or those of their kin and friends. They indicated that it did not matter whether the incidents had happened to them directly; even if they had only heard about them, this was enough to make them react on a personal level. Thus were attitudes and opinions formed.

This introduces an important distinction between that which is at a conscious level and easily visible, and that which is at an unconscious level in informing perceptions. It is at this deeper level that racism becomes most crucial. As Rex states in his analysis of racism,

> We create an inter-subjective world of physical objects by agreeing to attach labels to our experience. In doing this, we make the claim that they are in some sense the same experiences that other people have had, and we also connect them with experiences of our own, in that meanings do not stand by themselves but have definite relations to each other (Rex,1986:217).

Chapter VI explores how actual racism as well as people's perception of it has affected their lives in this country - particularly of the elderly women of minority status.

Analysing the effects of racism on the lives of elderly Indian women also highlights the context in which the immigrant population comes together as a homogeneous whole,

despite their various ethnic differences of nationality, language, religion, caste, etc.

1.3f. **Culture of complaint and the notion of *duhkh* (sadness)**

The `culture of complaint', is perhaps the most common feature of the lives of my informants, be they Sikhs or Gujaratis. There were various reasons, degrees and forms of expression of this by my informants. This culture of complaint is also specific to the nature of my sample population. Because my fieldwork was carried out in Asian organizations whose primary activities were counselling and advocacy, a large section of the members were those with problems. They went there to seek counsel for their various problems or help in filling out their housing benefit forms, DHSS forms, etc. The women who needed such help were usually the ones who did not know English, or how to read and write it, and were often living alone, having been turned out of the house by their children. Thus these women were sad (*duḥkhī*) and they had reasons to complain, which will be discussed in the thesis .

Even the other women who came to the organizations or went to the gurdwara (or temples), where I did the bulk of my fieldwork, were there just "to pass the time", "relieve boredom" by socializing with other women there, or just escaping from the "tensions in family life". These women were therefore generally neglected, lonely and isolated women in their families, or were living alone.

Thus while at one level I had selected a consciously complaining section of Indian women as subjects of my research (through my choice of fieldwork area), at another level complaints were being expressed unconsciously by the informants - something that I only realised in retrospect. Hammersley and Atkinson have pointed out that "instead of treating reactivity merely as a source of bias, we can exploit it. How people respond to the presence of the researcher may be as informative as how they react to other situations" (1983:15).

In my first talk with my informants, most of the women "lied" about their actual life or in their responses on various issues of their life. I use the word "lie" because it was not as if the women were reluctant to talk or were offering only partial facts; they were actually giving me completely different facts about their lives which intuitively I suspected, and which the workers at the organization confirmed as untrue. However, I

chose not to disclose this to my informants for fear of completely alienating them. I was conscious of the fact that, in spite of all their warmth towards me, women still considerd me an outsider and so were not willing to disclose the personal details of their lives.

Ballard notes a similar problem in his field work and states

> During the course of field-work it became evident that many people had learned only to present a fraction of their real concerns, for they did not *expect* outsiders to have any understanding of, or sympathy with, their own customs and beliefs. Indeed a frequent strategy was to present problems in a way which, they hoped, would make sense in terms of majority assumptions (1979:153). (Also see Laslett and Rapoport (1975:973) and Douglas (1971:242) on this).

This is something which most researchers have encountered. Cornwell talks of this as a difference in public and private accounts. Public accounts are usually the first interviews with each person and reflect "situations which are unfamiliar and unequal" (1984:14-16).

Even though I, being an Indian and thus an "insider", had been made welcome by several women in the Gujarati and Sikh communities, I was an "outsider" in as much as I was new to life in Britain.

But what has been important in women's interaction is the manner in which the relationship between the researcher and subject shifted within this power matrix.

At the start of interviews in the first few meetings a researcher is seen as one in power - more knowledgeable, one who is asking questions, etc. The informants respond to their presumed "inferior" position in this situation by imparting only that information which may be seen as common knowledge. Also, as I saw it, in giving "what are known facts" informants conform to what they feel is expected. (For this also see Bourdieu (1977) and Favret Saada (1980)). Women in our first meetings "lied" and "projected standard images" because they did not wish to be judged. This I felt was also their way of registering complaints against their present life. However this realization makes the reality of their lives sadder (*duḥkhī*) still.

At this point I realised that being accepted in the community was not enough, I wanted their confidence and trust in me - where they could confide their personal accounts to

me.

On such occasions I always wondered at the role and success of counselling services of the organizations. Here women would come and confide their problems and details to the counsellors, whom many met for the first time. Of course counsellors were seen as trained professionals who would help impartially. Talking to the counsellors at the organizations, I was told about how very few Asian women actually use their services. Blakemore and Boneham have pointed out several reasons why very few Asian elderly use these services: illness, physical inability, language, no particular need, lack of awareness of these organizations (1985:175-189; 1994:115).

In fact, one of the uses of this study for social policy researchers is that - unlike studies which focus on why women do not use facilities provided by organizations and day centres - this research focuses on those women who do and how they use the services offered. Also, as Blakemore (1985) has pointed out, most of the Asian voluntary services are provided by men and used by men (1994:125). My study, by contrast, concentrates on Asian women using these services.

According to the counsellors, the main reason why women refrained from coming to these organizations was because they were reluctant to approach an outsider for help. In times of crisis and need women would first turn to relatives and friends. They came to organizations only if they did not have these options or were referred to seek professional advice and help.

But I was not a qualified counsellor and women were not going to confide in me easily. So I had to be patient and build on their trust by meeting and talking to them regularly on a wide range of issues.

As a result of this patience, and my constant efforts to make my informants feel that they knew more and they were the ones who were going to teach me, I went along with the technique of "story telling". Women liked to talk and I allowed them to talk often prompting them with e.g "I want to know all about your childhood", etc. The results of this technique can be seen in the shape of the second chapter of this thesis.

Cornwell, drawing a distinction between public and private accounts says, while the

former are the results of "direct questions" the latter are borne out of being "invited to tell a story". She argues that the explanation for this variation is that

> a subtle shift of power takes place in the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. In the course of a single interview, the person being asked questions and answering them seemed reminded of the unnaturalness of what they were doing, talking about themselves to a stranger who was making a study of them. But when they were telling stories, their attention was focused on the story and the events it contained rather than the audience, and they shifted into a different and less self-conscious way of talking about the thoughts and feelings associated with their experiences (1984:16).

1.4. Fieldwork area, Organizations and problems

The fieldwork for this study was done between October 1991 and October 1992. However, being close to my fieldwork area has allowed and tempted me to keep in touch with some of my informants and so I have been able to include some more recent events which I feel have facilitated a better understanding of the communities studied.

As mentioned in section 1.1, I selected a few Asian organizations in Wood Green and Southall as well as two Gurdwaras in Southall where I could do my fieldwork on Gujarati and Sikh women who came on a fairly regular basis to these places.

These organizations were based in areas populated by large numbers of Gujaratis or Sikhs, and had memberships which reflected the local ethnic distribution. It was useful talking to Gujarati and Sikh women, and seeing their interaction with other members of the Indian community. I also often talked to women from other Asian communities, who came to the organizations primarily because they wanted to be heard. I was often told by the workers at the organizations to "hear out" a particular woman as "she has gone through a lot and has lots to tell". This allowed me to form a picture of the life of Asian women in London, so I could increase my understanding, and place the lives of the Gujarati and Sikh women in perspective vis-a-vis other South Asian women in this country.

Although I found enough women to interview at these organizations, I also interviewed women at the Brent Indian Association and Sanatan Dharma Mandir in Wembley, the Ramgardiah Gurdwara and Jat Gurdwara in Southall, some residents in Staines Road in Hounslow, women I met at various religious or community gatherings, or at parties and

functions, and on visits to my informants' houses where I spent whole days, occasionally staying overnight, e.g during the *Navrātrī* celebrations in the Gujarati community.

While most women were interviewed individually, at times they were with one or two other women who were members of the same household or a larger joint-family, or with friends or acquaintances from whom their life histories were not hidden. Women's responses and interaction in groups were also studied consciously, and are referred to in this thesis e.g. the discussion which followed a showing of a particular Indian movie in the women's video club at the Asian Women's Forum (or Milap).

The movies, which were at times suggested by me, involved social and familial themes like love marriage (Bobby), relationships between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law (*Sau din sās ke*), inter-community marriage (*Ek dūje ke liye*), women's changing roles (*Pratighāt*), etc. Usually, during the movie, one or two women would comment on a particular scene that she approved or disapproved of, and almost always after the movie many women would discuss the "rights" and "wrongs" of events shown in the movie. These moral judgements were based on either their personal experiences or the morals of their community.

Thus data have been collected at various places and in various ways, generally at the organizations where I met most of my key informants.

The interviews were conducted in Hindi or English depending on the choice and familiarity of the informants. Often the informants spoke in mixed Hindi and English or Hindi or English interspersed with Gujarati or Punjabi. While I can understand and speak Punjabi, I do not speak Gujarati though I am able to follow some of it if spoken slowly. Fortunately all the Gujarati women in my sample could speak either Hindi or English. Some of the vocabulary given in the thesis reflects Gujarati usage.

The analysis of the data has been a triple-fold process, i.e the data has been analysed firstly at the level of ideals, secondly, through the perceptions of the aged themselves, and thirdly on the basis of my own observations.

Problems and Caution

I should mention two major problems which I faced, firstly in the data collection, and secondly in the data presentation. Concerning the former, the main problem was of "recording" my data. Most of the women interviewed could not understand completely the purpose of my research. Also, as many of the women coming to the organizations were coming there to seek help or discuss a personal problem, any attempt at recording the talks would have been a breach of confidentiality. Women would simply refuse to talk if they were to be recorded. Only about four women in the sample did not object to being recorded, primarily because two of them were teachers and the other two were nurses and so understood the purpose of my research and were therefore not suspicious of my motives.

In order to retain most details as accurately as possible, I would interview women for shorter periods on one or two main issues each day and go back to them as many times as required. Most women were very co-operative and understanding in this process.

My main difficulty in the analysis and presentation of the data has been in my role as an "insider-outsider" to the community of study. Fardon has pointed out the problems of identifying ethnography as the study of the "other". He writes, "...the obverse side of their tendency to essentialize anthropology as the study of the `Other', which in turn reinforces the myth of an autonomous, cerebrating western subject who creates others on paper by means of experience, that, in turn, is assumed to be both transparent and outside history" (1990:22).

While aware of this, my problem was the opposite. While many aspects of my data about the lives of Gujarati and Sikh women in London were new to me as an outsider, I was also an insider as an Indian woman, even though I was a member of a younger generation. Several women cut short a lot of details and comments about their lives saying "You are an Indian, you know how it is". Generally I said, "Please give me your personal perspective", but on many occasions my familiarity with various customs and culture was taken for granted so that details were brief.

For ethical reasons the names of all my informants and workers at the organizations have been changed. In addition, the draft of the thesis had been given to some of the

workers at the various organizations where I did my fieldwork and four other informants who could read English. This was done so that they could verify the information contained in the thesis or register any objection they may have regarding any details or interpretations. The responses I have received have been positive.

Asian Women's Forum in Wood Green

Wood Green is situated in north-east London (Map - Appendix D). It is in the Borough of Haringey. According to the 1991 census (my fieldwork was done in 1991-92), Haringey has a population of 186,490 out of which approximately 2.8% are Indians (Appendices F and G).

Although the census records do not give us the classification of the Indian population in terms of regional origin and religious practice of various Indian communities in Wood Green this does not affect the research because the Asian Women's Forum was set up to serve the Asian women in the entire Borough. Also, the membership of the Forum extends to include women from all Asian communities in the Borough.

The Asian Women's Forum was set up in 1984 and became an instant source of help to the Asian women living in and around the area. In 1990 when I approached the Forum, it had a membership of approximately 500 women but the future existence of the Forum was uncertain. The government had drastically reduced the funds of various Borough Councils as a result of which they were having to cut down funding for charitable and voluntary organizations such as the Asian Women's Forum. Therefore when I expressed my desire to do fieldwork at the Forum, the workers' response was "if we exist". In June they had the answer - the Forum was to live on. Its funding had been reduced, as a result of which they had to reduce the number of their part-time workers as well as close their Mothers and Toddlers group which was being used by only six women at the time. However the Forum decided to re-open the group once they were able to raise some funds for it on the basis of the exclusive service it provided in the area.

However, the Asian Centre and Roshni in the Wood Green area closed down because of a shortage of funds.

The Asian Women's Forum offers counselling as its prime activity. Some of the most

common problems have included marital difficulties, loneliness, social isolation, inter-personal problems, debts, mortgage arrears and parenting. Information and advice was regularly sought on isuues such as housing, welfare benefits, education, employment, health, consumer affairs, poll-tax/council tax, leisure activities, immigration, police. There are two counsellors or `workers' as they are called because they do much more than just counselling. When I was doing my fieldwork one of the counsellors was a Gujarati Hindu woman and the other a Gujarati Ismaili woman. I mention the religious background because this was fairly important to most women when they came to seek help or counselling on personal matters at the organization. Most Muslim women would come to the organization when Preeti, the Gujarati Ismaili woman was on duty, and the Hindu women preferred to come when Vimla, the Gujarati Hindu woman was on duty. The significance of this distinction was shown during the preparations for the Annual General Meeting of the Forum. At this meeting a new Management Committee was to be elected. There were ten vacancies to be filled. That year the President of the Committee was a Gujarati Hindu woman and there were six other Gujarati Hindu members on the Committee. So a factor in that election was to equalise the number of Gujarati Hindu and Muslim women on the Committee, and also to consider appointing a Muslim woman as the President.

The communalism of the women extended to rigging the votes in the election, and to verbal conflict following the speech by the President. This was in spite of the women being warned about fighting in front of the white woman from the Borough Council who was present at the meeting, and who was responsible for allocating funds to the Forum. Emotions were displayed for their respective community causes until one woman was heard to raise her voice and say that the Forum was for all Asian women, not just Hindus and Muslims. When the results were announced the President was another Gujarati Hindu woman, and there were five other new Gujarati Hindu women on the Committee. The only consolation was that at least the Committee of ten had four Muslim members, one more than the previous year. This was an improvement over previous years.

Despite such divisions the Forum works well in providing the services already listed to the members of the Asian community.

The Asian Women's Forum also offered practical courses like stitching, body massage

as a cure for physical ailments, English language and Keep Fit. These latter were fairly popular with younger Asian women and some middle aged women. Older women avoided them for physical reasons like rheumatism, or because they did not want to wear anything but saris, which made the exercises difficult.

The Forum also organized special lectures on various issues which relate to women's lives generally, or to the Asians in London. Usually women from the community who could speak Gujarati or at least Hindi, and had relevant knowledge or experience, were invited to give the lectures. These lectures were often supplemented by videos and documentaries. Some of the special lectures and documentaries shown during the course of my fieldwork at the organization were on HIV and AIDS, Osteopaths, D.H.S.S, Haringey Disabilities Council, National Insurance, Asian sheltered residential accommodations (ASRA) and teaching of language classes.

One of the most popular events of the Forum was "Bring a Dish Day". This occasion was on the first Monday of each month. It was also the day when one of the special lectures was arranged so that women first heard the lecture and then enjoyed the food. This was always very well attended and they enjoyed food from various regions of India, as women took this opportunity to show off their culinary knowledge and skills. However, invariably, there were more Gujarati dishes than any other. This occasion was also a good time to observe interaction among women from various communities. Particularly noteworthy also was the "nature" of dishes prepared by women from various communities. Appudurai, basing his analysis on the contents of Indian cook-books writes, "the cuisine that is emerging today is a national cuisine in which regional cuisines play an important role, and the national cuisine does not seek to hide its regional or ethnic roots" (1988:5).

The openness to the cuisines of other regions which Appudurai comments on is not apparent in the behaviour of women, at least not in their public behaviour. In the public space of Bring A Dish Day they would habitually bring dishes that reflected their own regional cultural traditions.

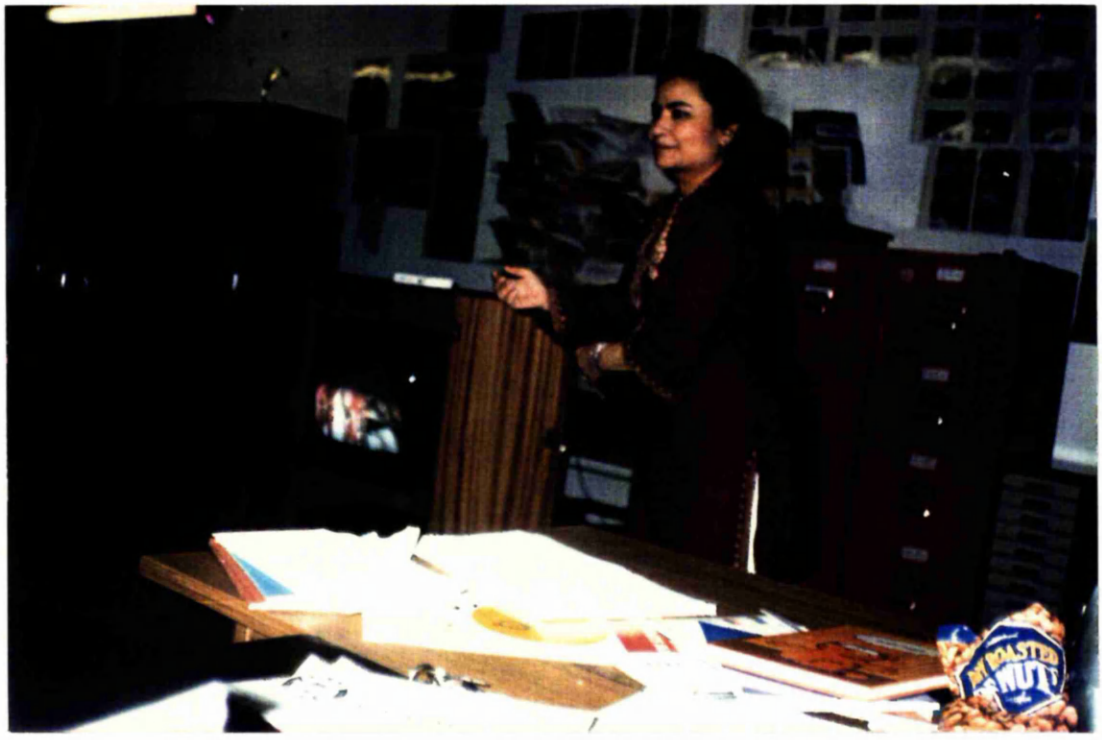
However a similar process to that described by Appudurai was evident in the domestic sphere. Gujarati, Punjabi and Bengali women often exchanged recipes with each other and occasionally tried out these dishes in their homes but I never saw a woman from a

community cooking and bringing a dish from any other community besides her own for the Bring A Dish Day. The reason was that it was important to project and affirm their ethnic identity in public. While inside the house they could be "national" in being open to cooking and trying out dishes of other communities, outside the house, it was important to affirm their specific ethnic and regional identity - in this case through preparation of ethnic, regional dishes of their community.

The other best attended and popular activity of the Forum was its Video Club which was held twice a week, on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. On Tuesdays Gujarati movies were shown and on Thursdays Hindi and, occasionally, Punjabi, Bengali and Pakistani films.

Just behind the Wood Green shopping city where the Asian Women's Forum is situated on the second floor, is a block of Council flats where one of my main informants (whom I will call Maasī though most elderly Gujarati women are referred by that name) lived with her two mentally retarded children. Most other informants lived in nearby Crouch End. Some came from areas which were ten to twenty minutes' walk or a bus ride from the Forum. Most of my informants had lived in Wood Green for twenty to thirty years and knew no other parts of London. They had very rarely travelled in the Underground, usually taking buses to visit relatives who also lived in the northern London areas. Some women, however, were adventurous and had participated in around-London trips organized by the Forum four to five times a year (depending on availability of funds and response from the members) and one trip a year outside London, either within the U.K or sometimes Europe "to see the world", as one woman put it. During 1991 some 50 women went to the Italian Riveria for a week .I was unable to go on this trip because of my lack of funds, but I accompanied them on the day trip to Southend-on-sea.

Asian Women's Forum -- Wood Green



Guest Speaker Lecturing on A.S.R.A

Forum Members Listening To The Lecture

Bring -A-Dish Day

Keep Fit Class

Stitching Classes

Massage Session

Women entertaining by playing music and singing

Video Club

The Brent Indian Association

The Brent Indian Association (BIA) in Wembley, north-west of London (Map - Appendix D) is the other organization I visited to meet Gujarati women. BIA was set up in 1965 in a small Hall in Wembley and moved to its present location on the Ealing Road in 1976. Mr Patel, the manager, suggested that the best day for me to interview the women would be Mondays and Saturdays from 1:30-4:30 p.m., which was the time for *satsaṅgs* (religious songs) at the organization, attended by over one hundred women, primarily elderly ones. Like the Asian Women's Forum, BIA was also mainly used for its counselling service and as a drop-in centre for Asian men and women to come and spend their time in, for its activities, or just to socialize with others there. BIA's two prime activities were the bridge club for men and video club for women. It also had a Youth club and a separate luncheon club for pensioners on Mondays. It offered classes in English on separate days for men and women, advanced sewing classes, music and dance classes, and free legal advice on Tuesdays between 6:30-7:30 by invited legal experts. BIA also organized all Gujarati and Indian festivals in the Borough of Brent. It also organized several trips for its members a few times a year. All people coming there appreciated the staff and the services provided by the organization.

Brent has a population of 227,903, according to the 1991 census. It also boasts of the largest ethnic (non-white) population in London - approximately 17% of whom are Indians (Appendices F and G).

I was introduced very formally by the manager to the women of the *satsaṅg* group the day I began my fieldwork there. The women were briefed by him about the nature of my work and the kind of questions I would be asking them. The manager also told the women that they need not disclose details of their lives, family, names, addresses and phone numbers if they did not wish. In spite of this I had a very warm welcome from the women present at the *satsaṅg*. Most of them expressed their desire and keenness to talk and so I interviewed the women in the room adjacent to the *satsaṅg* room, where women would come one by one to talk to me during the *satsaṅg*. Usually, after completing the interviews, I would also join the *satsaṅg*, which most of the women present appreciated. Many women were surprised that in spite of my education I was still religious.

I attended some of the outings arranged by the BIA with my women informants, like the

day trip to Southall, to Hyde Park, to Madame Tussauds and once again to what seemed to be a rather favourite and affordable outing to Southend-on-sea. These trips gave me an opportunity to interact and observe the women in more informal settings. These occasions also brought us closer so that women felt confident about inviting me to their homes for special occasions like the birthday of a grandchild, the marriage of a relative, or a *pūjā*, and thus provided the opportunity to meet their family and friends.

One event that I always enjoyed with my Gujarati informants was the *Navrātrī* celebrations (Nine auspicious days of worshipping the female principle of *shaktī* in the form of various Hindu Godesses) - which is the main festival for the Gujarati community.

Satsaṅg at Brent Indian Association

Milap - Day Centre for the Elderly

Milap is situated in the Town Hall Annexe in Southall (Borough of Ealing), in north-west London (Map - Appendix D). Southall is popularly called *chotā Punjab* - mini-Punjab (Helweg,1979:1) by Indians living in the U.K because it has the single largest population of Sikhs in Britain. In fact the entire Borough of Ealing according to the 1991 census has a population of 264,867, of which approximately 15.6% are Indians (Appendices F and G). Though the statistics do not give the ethnic divide within the Indian population, there is an assumption that 90% of the South Asian (Peggie,1982) residents of Southall are predominantly Punjabis (and mostly Sikhs, at that) (Vertovec,1991:14).

Milap was established in 1980. It is a very well run organization. Its membership is restricted to retired men and women, or those above the age of 65 for men and above 60 for women, from any ethnic community. But because almost the entire ethnic population of Southall is Sikh, it is seen primarily as a Sikh organization. It has about five to six full-time workers and about the same number of part-time workers. Because Milap's membership is restricted to elderly people, it proved to be a very useful place for me in terms of my sample of Sikh women. Milap's cheap luncheon facility was widely used by elderly men and women.

The activities and services offered at Milap were very similar to the ones offered in the other two organizations discussed above i.e they had a video club, a bridge club, lectures on special issues affecting the elderly people or Asians in the U.K. Advice and help was constantly sought on problems such as D.S.S benefits, retirement pensions, over 80s pensions, N.C.R.P, income support, housing benefits, rebates, appeals, housing, health, visas, passport, immigration, nationality and other welfare rights for the disabled elderly.

Milap also offered some exclusive services for the elderly, like bathing, and laundry services for deprived and very old senior citizens. It offered excellent luncheon meals, vegetarian and non-vegetarian at subsidised cost, and it has a tea club. Milap also offered a meals-on-wheels service and mini-bus transport for the disabled elderly. It also organized special health screenings.

Besides, it had table tennis, exercise bikes and a keep-fit group. It offered classes in English language and crafts work. A craft fair was held on International Women's Day where women sold their hand-crafted items. Milap also boasted a Poet's corner - where attempts were made to enhance their confidence and interest in their culture, language and philosophy. It had an extensively used and well stocked library with books and papers in Punjabi, Hindi, Gujarati and Urdu.

Milap also organized several day trips to various places in London, the U.K and Europe. I accompanied my informants on a trip to Blackpool and a River Thames Boat cruise, which I was told is an annual event in Milap's programme. Both these trips were attended by over 100 men and women. These are usually planned at the beginning of the year and are really looked forward to by men and women members of Milap.

Luncheon Club at MILAP

Sea-Side Outing with Sikh Women

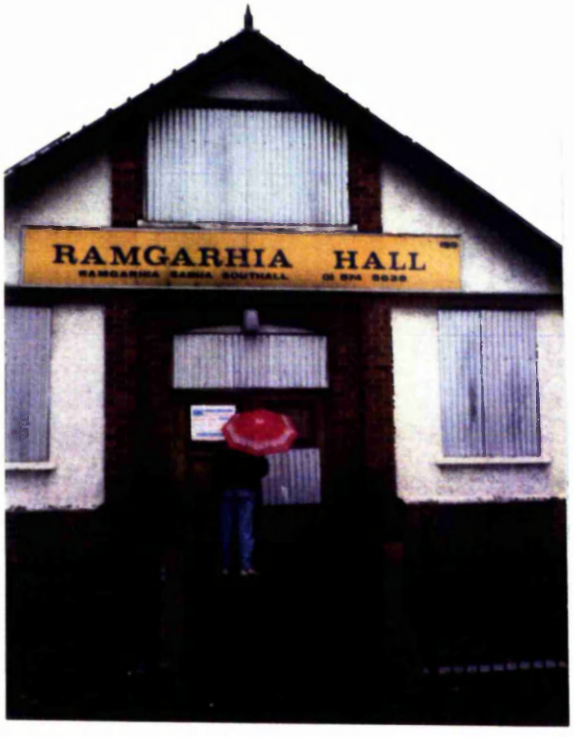
Gurdwaras in Southall

The Havelock Road Gurdwara is the most popular Jat Sikh Gurdwara in Southall, and the Oswald Road Gurdwara is the most popular Ramgardiah Sikh Gurdwara in Southall. Only in Southall have I come across Gurdwaras so explicitly divided on caste lines. In smaller towns with fewer Sikhs this distinction does not extend so far as maintaining two separate caste gurdwaras, but in Southall a large number of Jat and Ramgardiah Sikhs can afford to keep separate caste identities alive in the form of separate gurdwaras too. Although neither of the gurdwaras restrict their membership to a particular caste, the separation is informally observed. The Singh Sabha Gurdwara on Kings Road is also a Jat Gurdwara. As Ballard and Ballard have pointed out "it is both striking and significant that temple (gurdwara) attendance abroad has become much more frequent than it is in Punjab" (1977:37). This may not necessarily indicate the greater religiosity of residents here. As my study will show, in the U.K. gurdwaras are seen not only as citadels of religious knowledge but epitomise the principle of "community spirit". In Southall the community spirit is divided on caste lines and various gurdwaras serve (not explicitly) specific Sikh castes and in a sense therefore can be compared to various caste associations of the Gujarati community.

I primarily concentrated on the Havelock Road Gurdwara and Oswald Road Gurdwara, for these were the two most popular gurdwaras and had at any time of the day at least ten to fifteen Sikh men and women present. More Sikh men and women, however, arrived at lunch time for a free meal offered in the *langar* (communal kitchen) in the gurdwara. The *langar* expresses the community service and spirit of brotherhood emphasised in the Sikh religion. *Langar* meals are cooked and served by both men and women, although invariably the meals get cooked by the women and served by the men, as was often pointed out to me by men and women. Also, men and women sat on separate sides of the gurdwara during prayers.

While I visited the gurdwara, usually in the early afternoons, to have a longer talk with the women present there, I also visited the gurdwara on Sunday afternoons when there would be a large congregation of Sikhs with their families who came to attend the morning *Śabad Kīrtan* (preaching from the holy book).

Jat Gurudwara on Havelock Road



Ramgarhia Hall on the Broadway

Afternoon attendence at Havelock Road Gurudwara

Kīrtan sung by Women at the Gurudwara

Langar Being Served by Men

1.5. Plan of the Thesis

The next chapter presents the migration histories of informants up to the time they came to live in London. While recounting closely the experiences of six of my informants (three Gujaratis and three Sikhs whose migration experiences I consider typical), an insight is provided as to how these experiences have affected their settlement patterns and shaped their attitudes and responses to "home", their identity, and life in a western country.

While recounting experiences of their early life most women introduced a number of issues which they considered important in their lives in London. It is these issues which are discussed systematically in the following chapters.

Chapter III considers the present lives of my informants in their ageing years. As one of my informants said, women see their lives as primarily based on "work, work inside the house and work outside the house, no retirement, no time for leisure, only work till the day I die". Most women have had to work in London because of economic necessity. Even in old age they need to continue working for economic or personal reasons. Herein begins the tension between the world of ideal and reality in the lives of immigrant women, i.e the tension between the traditional ideal Indian ethic which saw woman's world as confined within the house, and the reality of life in Britain which necessitated her going out to work. While this added dimension of a woman's role introduced changes, the question is whether it contributed to the tension or resolved it in some way?

The first section of this chapter therefore looks at the dynamics of women's employment and how that has affected the ageing experience of Gujarati women. The second carries out a similar analysis of Sikh women, discussing it with regard to the similarities and differences with Gujaratis.

Chapter IV focuses on the present family lives of immigrant Indian women ageing in London, i.e how they lead their daily lives within their families, or outside it if living alone. Thus this chapter looks at relationships with close family members, and highlights the central theme of the tension between expectation and experience. For most women "expect" an ideal traditional Indian family life, and this tension tests most close relationships. So the chapter examines the role of the family and its older members

in the Indian context, and traces the changes within both.

Elderly Indian women, whether willingly or not, feel they have to accept these changes and learn to cope with, and adjust to them. A question raised at this point is what are the choices and alternatives available to the women? Are the choices voluntary or forced?

Chapter V shows how Indian elderly women have gone through several hardships in their immigrant lives and have emerged as survivors. Whether happy or sad, whether living in families or separately, elderly women are social beings and fulfill their social needs as well as coping with the ageing process and role losses through an extensive network of neighbours, friends, acquaintances, or sometimes through religious worship, the media or processes of reminiscence.

Chapter VI asks what society does for ageing Indian women? The answer is sought in the relationship and interaction of the Indian community with white society, and the nature of actual and perceived racism. In this, the chapter looks at possible ways of easing these tensions.

The conclusion brings together the essential arguments of each chapter, and attempts to see how far the theoretical argument and subsidiary themes of the thesis define the essence of the lives and ageing experiences of Gujarati and Sikh women ageing in London.

The conclusion also questions whether the specific ageing experiences of Gujarati and Sikh women can be applied more widely to ageing women of any immigrant community in a western country. Some questions for further research are also suggested.

CHAPTER II

SETTLING IN LONDON

2. Introduction

> People come to a new country, they start a new life, but the past they can't forget it. They bring it with them - memories, attitudes and relationships.
>
> (Wilson,1978:1)

This chapter begins with the premise that in order to understand the present, we need to know and understand the past. As Tilak explains,

> Events in a particular life are important, but examination of them in isolation will not explain the nature of ageing; one must focus on the underlying human structure in which individual life events are reflected (1989:44).

Thus if we are to understand Gujarati and Sikh women's responses to their ageing experience, we need to be aware of their background and past experiences.

This chapter presents the background details regarding the Gujarati and Sikh women who migrated to London from India and Africa. It focuses on the socio-economic background of the migrants, the circumstances and events which brought them to the U.K and their experience of settling in this country.

Here it should be recognized that there has been previous research by scholars on the migration histories of Indians in the U.K. Most of these studies can be divided into pre-1970s migration and post-1970s migration. While the essential feature of the former was the individual and sporadic nature of migration (Visram,1986; Gifford,1990), the post-1970s migration was primarily family migration from Africa and India (Lyon,1972; Ballard,1983; Bhachu,1984; Twaddle,1990). However no study to my knowledge has focused solely on the nature and effect of female migration. Even Khan's study (1980) on Indian and Pakistani women migrants to Britain has concentrated on their adjustment problems and strategies following migration to Britain, and has not attempted to trace their migration histories prior to their settlement in Britain. Therefore the first aim of this chapter is to fill this lacuna.

Khan also sees all first generation migrants to Britain as dependents. She states, "that is their actual and legal status" (1980:175). But as my study will show, almost 80% of the women who came from Africa came largely in their middle-aged years with families and some had been working so they cannot be seen as dependents. However there were about 20% of the women who came from India to join their children's families (sons in most cases) who came as dependents in their ageing years. This chapter accounts for the two different groups of first generation migrant women to Britain from Africa and India.

Also, in providing the background details of the informants with a detailed emphasis on their settlement pattern in the U.K the second more theoretical aim of this chapter is to test two hypotheses. Fennel, Phillipson and Evers point out that

> There is great diversity in previous life histories...(of) Asians...who came many years ago either by choice or as exiles or refugees and have grown old here. They have different expectations and experiences from those who came in later life or old age to join families already established (1988:123).

This chapter will examine the extent of the applicability of this observation.

The other hypothesis which this chapter will test is Francis' hypothesis that

> The process of successful adjustment to old age begins early in life. Living within a domestic unit during childhood and learning the negotiated dimensions of family living are crucial....if one can have ongoing interaction with ageing parents - one can learn about growing old in a kind of advanced socialization. In many cases elderly parents provide appropriate models for successful adjustment in old age (1984:147).

Both the above hypotheses are crucial to understanding the women's responses, and their reactions to the ageing process.

This chapter begins by introducing three Gujarati women and three Sikh women from the communities I interviewed in North and South London. Their experiences and outlook are representative of the wider sample.

Using biographies to describe informants' lives is not new, as several writers

(Wilson,1978; Helweg,1979; Sharma,1971; Mernissi,1988; Atiya,1982) have chosen this method. However I have allowed the individuals to speak for themselves in what I term an "extempore" method. After a brief introduction of myself and the objectives and area of my reserach, I asked the women if they could give me some of the major background details of their lives.

The questions on the background details were grouped together and the women were encouraged to speak extemporaneously about their lives up to their arrival in London. There was little prompting or asking of leading questions. These biographies are verbatim accounts of how women saw and related their migration process up to coming to settle in London.

The use of this method was rather intentional because agreeing with Johnson (1976) I believe it is important to allow a place for older people's own subjective concerns and life experiences. This approach draws on two realted social science traditions in the U.S: symbolic interactionism and the life-history approach in sociology (Gearing and Dant,1990:144). Gearing and Dant, explaining Johnsons's use of biography writes, "By identifying main strands in a life (`careers'), how they have shaped and been shaped by significant biographical events (family, upbringing, marriage, work, parenthood, retirement, widowhood and so on), we will bettter understand the way the individual concerned experiences `old age', and his/her present needs, satisfactions and problems" (1990:144-45).

Of course there are limitaions and problems in using biographies - e.g the unstructured heaps of data. But I attempetd to steer clear of that trap by limiting the use of this technique for covering only a part of informants lives (up to coming to live in London) and going back to more focused detailed questions realting to their later life in London. However the extempore and partial biographical method did allow women to express some of their initial views and perceptions without any leading questions.

Thus women spoke about their experiences of migration and settlement in Africa and then in London, from villages in Punjab and Gujarat: what they felt, what they saw as changes, what they learnt, how they struggled or found satisfaction and happiness, and how they adapted to the changes and probably changed in many ways themselves. While they spoke, issues which were important to them emerged, nostalgia for and

romanticisation of home, notions of identity, views of urban life, attitudes towards the West, racism, the importance of education, perception of ageing, practicalities of life in a foreign country, notions of happiness and sadness, etc. Some of these issues are discussed in this chapter in a preliminary form, and are developed during the rest of the thesis.

The other purpose in using the biographies is to show the importance and nature of reminiscence in the lives of ageing Gujarati and Sikh women. Various theories of reminiscence referred to in chapter 1.3c, have looked at the socio-psychological usages of reminiscence, i.e as life-review (Butler,1963), self-preservation, preserving identity and self-esteem (Bornat,1994), and construction of one's culture and self (Coleman,1994). This chapter analyses the value of these approaches in relation to the ageing Gujarati and Sikh women.

Three Gujarati and three Sikh women provided the following histories.

2.1 Individual Biographies

2.1a Three Gujarati women

Masi, spoke in Hindi, using Gujarati words and phrases occasionally.

I am 65 years old. I was born in Jamnagar which is in Gujarat. I had two elder brothers, an elder sister and two younger sisters. My father used to be in the paper business. My mother, of course, used to do house work - in those days how many women used to work outside their homes? Women also used to study much less. Both my brothers studied till class VIII and then started working with our father in his business. My elder sister did not study at all, she always used to help mother in house work. My younger sister and I studied till class V. But what use has it been? We got married so early. All we brothers and sisters, the moment we were 15 or 16 were married off. But then, in those days, that was the custom. A girl, in particular, was always married off between the age of 12 to 15. Each child had to be married while the parents, hand and feet (*hāth aur pag chāle che*), were still working[1] and what was the use of keeping girls longer in their parents house because it would mean many extra people to feed and then there was the

1. While they were still quite physically fit.

fear of the girl getting spoilt (*bagṛelī*). To maintain the honour (*izzat*) of the house, of the entire family was the biggest virtue, it is so even today, yet a number of things have changed, a lot of looseness (*khulā*) has come. I was married when I was 15. My husband was 23 years old, that was because he had gone to Africa for work when he was quite young and could not return home for a while to get married.

After my marriage I also went to Africa, Uganda in 1942. My husband used to work as a mechanic there. My husband's elder brother who was also there worked as a mechanic too, but we did not stay with him and his family. For me, it was all a change in such a big city [Kampala], in other people's land, and to stay alone. There were a number of Indian families and Gujarati families. Many of them were calling their wives and children and their older parents to Uganda. Actually during our stay there, within ten years almost each Indian had his entire family there. It never felt that we were in a foreign country. We had also started speaking Swahili. In ten years I had four children. The eldest was a son, then a daughter, a son and finally a daughter. Actually, my youngest daughter was born in India.

In 1955 we had gone back to India. It happened so, that for the first 5-6 years after our wedding my husband's work was going fine but then gradually his heart was getting out of his job and he felt this great compulsion to do well in India and contribute to our economy. We had enough money to be able to go back to India and start a business there. Thinking that, we went back to India in 1955. But then, after staying and working in Africa for so many years it was not easy settling in India, particularly for my husband who had stayed there [Africa] for 17 years. My husband, in the three years that we were in India started a number of businesses, but he did not have as much profit as he expected. Actually, after staying in Africa, our habits, particularly my husband's habit had been spoilt. There, one has more money, more comfort and luxury, one does not have to listen and do things for one's relatives 24 hours a day. But when we returned to India we had to face yet another bitter truth, which was that both our younger children, the son who was 5 years old and the daughter who was 3 years old, were as the doctor said "mentally retarded" (*magaj ochu*) from birth, and so there was no cure for it. We tried to understand that probably it was because of my husband's constant problems with his job and our leaving Africa and coming to India suddenly that might have had an effect on me when I was pregnant, because in my family or my husband's family there is no such case. Since we could not settle in India we decided to go back to Africa.

After going back to Africa my husband opened a small shop and we could manage our house with that. But we did not earn too much money. My husband always kept himself under constant tension. He did not want me to work because there was no great need and then the children were still small and of-course two of them were so ill (*bīmar*). In 1962, five years after our return to Africa, my husband had a sudden heart attack and he died. It was as if my entire life had changed (*māri ākhi jindagī badlāyī gayī*). I suddenly felt old (*būṛhī*) and completely dependent (*āśrit*). I had four small children, no job, no savings, in an alien (*bījī* -meaning different) country. My husband's elder brother is a very selfish man, it was as good as not having him there. I was left with only one option - to return to India. I sold the shop with the help of some of our Gujarati friends and left for India with my four children. I lived with my elder brother's family instead of my husband's family who were not very sympathetic towards me and particularly my sick[2] children. But then, though I was given immediate shelter, the question was for how long? As my brother's children got married and increased their families, the space in the house became less and my children and I became a burden. My eldest son had started working at a very young age. In 1965 when he was 20 years old we got him married but then, that very year, he came to London with his wife, for he had got a job here with the help of one of his friends who had come here a year before him and had called him for this job when he saw one. After that, my eldest daughter got married and came to London as well. My son had found this match for her. Gradually it was becoming very difficult to stay with two ill children with my relatives in India. Even though my eldest son was paying our expenses right from the day he was earning. He used to send us money even from abroad and therefore I did not have to be economically dependent on any of my relations. But gradually the problem of my ill children, Satish and Geeta, was increasing. Each day somebody or other would scold them and say something bad to them. One day my brother in whose house we were staying scolded Satish very badly and said that if he boasts so much on the wealth of his brother in London, then why doesn't he stay there instead of being a burden on their chest. And that day I thought that no relative can ever be yours and so I wrote about this incident to my eldest son. I got a reply from him within a month saying that we all should come there.

So in 1974 I came to London to live with my eldest son. But life in London is so odd

---

2. Māsī always referred to her mentally retarded children as *bīmār* (sick or ill).

(*ajīb*). Right from the first day I have been seeing and hearing only about rising expenses in this country. If the woman here does not work, it is impossible to run a family. So I saw here that my daughter-in-law also works and that is how my son can feed his three children and we three. I felt very bad but I was uneducated and could not speak English, what work could I do and who would have taken care of Satish and Geeta? But then, as I said, this country is very odd, everything is so expensive; but there are also so many benefits (the word benefit would be used in English) for the needy and helpless (*asahāy*). One day my daughter who is also married here and used to come to meet me each week asked me if I would like to stay on my own with Satish and Geeta and so not be such a burden on my son. When I said yes, she told me what we could do and we applied for a Council flat, putting forward Geeta's case.

We got this flat within six months. I am very happy living on my own, at least I do not feel I am being a burden on anybody. My eldest son and his family and my daughter and her family and also all my grandchildren come very often to meet me and talk at least once a day on the phone. It's just that now I am getting much older and so get tired (*thāke gayī*) caring for Satish and Geeta everyday. I have a constant worry as to who will take care of them after me. My eldest son and daughter do care for them, but they too have a family and have their jobs. But then, we will see when that happens. It is just that till my hands and feet are working I do not want to send them to a hospital, I can't help whatever happens after me. I am really tired now. At times I feel like going to India and meeting my brothers and sisters. However I do go in 5 or 6 years for somebody's wedding or for sad occasions, but only Geeta can go with me, Satish does not feel good with people there so when I go he stays for a few days at my eldest son's place. But then I can't leave him for more than one or two weeks. And then, as I have told you, relatives treat you well only if you are staying for a few days, if you stay longer, their love changes. So that is the way my life has been going on.

Geeta, spoke to me in mixed Gujarati, Hindi and English.

I am 61 years old. I was born in Uganda and lived there all my life till I came here in 1971 when Idi Amin expelled all us Asians from Uganda. My father had gone to Africa for the Ugandan Railway construction. My mother had joined him with my two elder brothers, six years after he had been there. I was born there. My father worked with the railways and my mother was a house-wife. She always had lots to do at home.

We had a very nice life in Uganda. Our house was large and beautiful. It was such a good climate in Uganda the whole year. I really miss that. People were so friendly, Asians and Africans, everyone was very friendly. Even the food there was so good, more variety of fruits and vegetables which tasted much better. Life there was just so good. We had lots of other Gujarati friends. Most of my parents' brothers and sisters were also in Uganda and Kenya and we visited them very often. We were also members of *Gujarat Sabhā* - a large organization with almost 800 people in their membership. My parents, particularly my father, went to all the meetings of the *Sabhā* and my mother and we children went to it for all the Indian and Gujarati festivals that we celebrated there. We also had our *Patel Association* and my father was the vice-president of that organization. My mother also used to help in setting up all the functions and activities in that organization....My father went to India once when I was 10 or 11 years old but my mother and we children never went to India.

I went to school and college in Uganda. At the age of 21 I got the job of a teacher in school. I was teaching standards V, VI and VII. I enjoyed teaching. In 1954 when I was 22 years old, my parents found a boy for my marriage with the help of my mother's sister. My husband was 25 years old and worked in a Government office. My husband had come to Africa with his parents from Gujarat in India at the age of 3, and therefore Africa was as much a home for him as for me. Even now we both see ourselves as more African than Indian, but, of course, Gujaratis. It's like first we are Gujaratis and then we are Africans. I have never been to India and nor has my husband after coming to Africa. So Africa is home for us.

I lived 18 years of my married life in Africa, Uganda, close to my own and my husband's family. Like in most joint households, I also had my share of problems living with my husband's family but nothing very major. My own family was there to help (*madad*) and support (*sahārā*) me. I had a daughter after the first year of my marriage and then a son after two years and another son after four years. Because I was working too we had a very good life in Africa and our children went to good schools. My youngest son was only ten when troubles started in Uganda and our life turned upside-down. Idi Amin just simply expelled all Asians from Uganda. It was like being banished from your own country, your soil, where you were born. The feeling of those days is still so real for me. I am talking to you and I can feel the sadness (*duḥkh*) and pain (*dard*) of those years.

Our life has not been the same after that. There was no question of going back to India as we had known no other land but Africa and our parents, relatives and friends all had British passports, so we came to London. But life has never been happy since...at least for us.

Many of our friends and relatives did settle well. But both me and my husband had to suffer for the first three years before getting jobs in the area near where we are living. And then, since we had left in a great hurry, we could not sell our house etc. and so had no savings or money as such. And then life in London was so expensive. I got a teaching job but in a primary school and my husband was reduced to a clerical position so we had to rent a house because we could not afford to buy it. We somehow managed to continue our children's education. They were horrible days. We were never well-off. We always had to budget our eating expenditure. Going on holidays was completely out of the question. We even had to limit going and meeting our friends and relatives as transport is so expensive here. We could afford to buy a second hand car only ten years after being here and that was also because our eldest son had started working, and my daughter who is also a teacher. With that things became easy but never good mind you! We had lost our home. We never felt and still don't feel we belong here. Anyway, now our children are all married and within our own caste. Their marriages were arranged by our relatives and friends. My daughter lives in Leicester with her husband and his family. My youngest son moved out of this house with his wife because this house was too small for two brothers and their families and my husband and myself.

Now of course both me and my husband are retired and in one way dependent on our eldest son (*ek rīte hūṁ ane mārā pati amārā chokrāvo ūpar ādhārit chiye*) who now pays the mortgage and all other bills for the house. We, my husband and myself, contribute from our pensions and benefits to groceries in the house and we often buy things for our grandchildren. I do as much house work as I can since my daughter-in-law goes out to work. So I do most of the work at home even though I am not so young any more. My husband does not help much at all - I wish he would, at least with some heavy shopping which I have to do alone. It is sad (*duḥkh*), but now that I am retired I am expected to do all this and most of the house work etc. If I don't I am sure I will have to listen to a number of things [complaints], as many older women do who are living as complete dependents on their sons and their families. I don't want that to happen, yet. So, as long as my hands and feet work, which I hope they do for a long time, I shall

continue doing all this. Recently however, I got diabetes and both me and my husband also suffer from blood pressure, so I am slightly scared (*ḍaro*) of our health and energy in future. But let us see. So far our lives have been a question of survival (*jīvī e che*) in London and we have survived, how long we can continue doing so we will see....Is that all you wanted to know?

Sudha, spoke in fluent Hindi to me.

My age is not much. I am 57 years old but I know that I look at least ten years older than that. But ten years ago I used to look at least ten to twelve years younger than my age. It is these worries (*pareśānī*), sadness (*duḥkh*), circumstances (*paristhiti*) which make a person age. I will tell you about my life. I was born in 1936 in Ahmedabad in Gujarat. We are Brahmans. Both my parents were very traditional (*dhārmik)* people. It is only last year that my mother died and my father died two years before that. My father used to work in a government office. My mother used to stay at home. In those days few women used to work outside their homes and particularly not the women from higher caste families. And as I said both my parents were traditional people and in those days one considered women and daughters of the house as a family's honour; it was preferable to keep them inside the house. And therefore while all my three brothers were allowed to complete their schooling, both my sister and myself were not allowed to study further than class X. First my elder sister was married and then I was married off at the age of 17.

My husband also used to work in a government office. His house and family was exactly like ours, meaning they were also Brahmans. His family was also very particular about traditions. I did not have much problem in my husband's family because I was born and bred (*parvariś*) in a similar atmosphere (*vātāvaraṇ*). I had three children in the first 9 years of my marriage, first a daughter, then a son and then again a daughter. Our family life was exactly like that of any high caste Gujarati household. We did not have much money but had lots of respect (*sammān*).

My eldest son who had done a B.A from Gujarat university started a garments business with his friend from the class at college. As the business expanded they both came abroad. My son now has an Indian garment and *saree* shop in Wembley. Two years later, in 1980 my eldest son called his younger brother here. We had got both our sons

married in India before they came here so when they came here they came here with their wives. My youngest son also has a restaurant in Wembley. Both the brothers are earning and eating well. My daughter got married in Ahmedabad. Her husband also has a garment business, actually he was my eldest son's friend. So then, we had a very ordinary (*ām*) simple (*sādhāraṇ*) kind of life but then, who knew what God wanted. My husband had been suffering from diabetes and blood pressure problems for a couple of years. He was also over-weight. One day he had a sudden heart attack and within 24 hours he died. It was as if I was left absolutely alone (*bilkul akelī ho gayī*). That time I did have my parents and in-laws and other relatives but in our country a widow is almost left alone. After the death of her husband her in-laws' attitude towards her changes completely and the parents cannot take back their daughter in their house, and that is what happened in my case. I could not go to my daughter's house because she was married and living with her in-laws so that just left me on my sons' support.

So when my sons called me here I came here in 1983, a year after my husband's death. But then, it is here that one actually feels the true (*sahī*) sense of loneliness and dependency. You would think that I had brought up my sons and they had come here in their mature years and so they will not change, but then the life here is such that one changes or has to change. We may look Gujarati but then we have really changed to quite an extent. Now you can see the difference between me and the Gujaratis who have come from Africa or from the ones like my grandchildren who are born and being brought up here or one can see the difference (*aṅtar*) between the women who are working outside their homes and the ones who stay primarily inside their homes. So it is this difference that I see everywhere. I stay among the Gujarati community in Wembley but then both my neighbours on either side are Gujarati women from Africa. One was born in Africa and has never been to India and the other one had gone to Africa when she was ten years old and has not been to India since, so she hardly knows anything about India. We can communicate because we share the language but we can share little else and do not therefore spend much time in each other's company. My daughter-in-law also works with my son in the shop. Both my grandsons speak in English most of the time so I can't really talk with them. I do whatever work there is to be done at home and then I come here to the Centre, spend time on *bhajans* (religious songs) or talk to the ladies here, yet there is this emptiness (*khālīpan*). Even though I am close to my children yet the life here is so busy that it is little surprise that I feel so lonely (*akelī*). It is because I keep thinking like this that I have also got blood pressure

problems now and that is why I look older than my age.

2.1b. Three Sikh women

Balli, spoke in mixed Hindi and Punjabi.

Last month I became 60. I was born in a village near Jullundur [Punjab]. My father used to work on the farm. My mother used to stay at home. We had a lot of land and therefore we were very rich. Mother and all we children used to help our father on the farm during sowing and harvesting of crops. I have three elder brothers and an elder sister. My elder brothers work on their own as well as on my father's farm, my youngest brother does business in farming machines like tractors. All we brothers and sisters have studied till V or VIII standard. It wasn't the custom in our village to study more than that and most children particularly the girls used to get married soon after studying that much. All my brothers had got married between the ages 17-20 but I got married at the age of 22 because my elder sister had not got married till then, as she had a defective eye and therefore it was difficult to arrange a match for her. And in our village till the elder child gets married younger children cannot marry. Therefore my father had to give a lot of money for my elder sister's wedding. The match for my marriage was suggested by my mother's brother who used to stay in Africa. Though my in-laws were in Jullundur my husband used to work in Kenya.

So after my marriage I went to Kenya with my husband. And it was then my life changed. I was a girl from a village come to live the rest of her life in a city in a foreign country. My husband used to work at the post-office. His salary was enough for the two of us but not sufficient to bring up my two sons who were born within three years of our marriage. In the three years however I had learnt Swahili and some English so I started working at my friend's husband's shop, but I did used to get quite tired. It was quite taxing to bring up two children and do all the work of the house and also outside. My husband used to help occasionally when asked but then it is very difficult managing alone without any other person from the family to help out in need. However many friends one may have and however good they may be yet one cannot depend on them too far, whereas if one has a close relative and whatever they may say, they still help and can be counted upon more in times of real need. Maybe some people feel differently about this but because I have never stayed close to any relative I have always felt their

absence. Even though in my entire life I have stayed for a maximum period in Africa, yet India has always been my home. Maybe after staying in Africa for thirty years I had changed quite a bit yet I always remembered my parents, my brothers and sister and my village. And each 4-5 years whether my husband could join us or not, my children and me used to go to India and meet my parents and all the relatives and friends. My children got a lot of affection from them. My children still go to India every 4-5 years. But my children also say that though they love India, Africa is their home perhaps because they have been born and bred there. Only last year my eldest son went to Africa on a holiday with his friends and he loved it there. I also miss Africa, Kenya a lot, but the only difference between me and my children is that if somebody asks me where would I like to go back, I would say India for India is home for me because I was born and brought up there. But, maybe that is also because where I gained so much in Africa I also lost a lot there, meaning my husband. My husband died in a car accident in 1985.

Just two years before that both my sons had come to England for business, one was in London and the other in Birmingham. There was no point in staying alone so I came to London to stay with my eldest son. And it was as if all the illnesses had been waiting to surround me. Though I was only 52 years old when I came here, I developed high blood pressure and rheumatism. The doctor said it was because of the sudden climatic change. My daughter-in-law perhaps does not trust me as much, she still thinks that I pretend these illnesses and the pain in my hands and legs to escape from work, but God is my witness. I suffer so much pain and problems because of these illnesses. But what can an ill (*bīmār*) and dependent (*asahāy*) person like me do? I am scared of living alone so I listen to everything that is said against me with closed ears. So far it hasn't come to being turned out of the house. Many a times I think of going to my brothers and sisters in India but then I think, will they be able to do much for me when my own children can't. And so why should I be a burden on them? Really, after my husband's death and my illnesses and the attitude of my daughter-in-law and indifference (*beparvāhī*) of my son as well as absence of any close relative in England, I keep quite sad (*duḥkhī*). Hoping that with God's grace I may die early, I come to the gurdwara everyday. I eat lunch in the *langar* here so that if I cannot do too much work at home, I may not increase any work for my daughter-in-law by making her cook lunch for me. My daughter-in-law in Birmingham is even worse. She categorically refused to keep me as anything more than a guest in her house over a few days. Bless my elder son that at least he did not turn me on the roads. When I see myself like this I remember India much more and

miss people there even more, but then my sons [are here] and I suppose I will die in this cold country.

Gurpreet, spoke primarily in mixed Hindi and Punjabi but also used a few English words occasionally.

I am only 56 but I feel much older. So much has happened that I feel I have lived a long life. Anyway, I was born in Uganda. My parents migrated to Uganda with many other Indian families for the Ugandan railway construction. My two elder brothers and a sister were born in India, Kapurthala [Punjab], that's where my parents come from. I am the last child and was born in Uganda. But all of us used to go to India every alternate year. I remember my mother saying that she needs to work [she used to stitch garments for a private company] only so that we can afford to go to India and meet the rest of the family and friends. And though I liked India and liked meeting my grandparents and so many uncles and aunts who used to spoil us with food and presents, Uganda was home for me. I remember when I grew up a bit, I used to compare and think that Uganda is so much more beautiful than India, it was not so hot and dusty as in India. Though we could buy many nice things in India, our house in Uganda had better things, more comfortable compared to my grandparents' house in Kapurthala.

My parents in spite of living in Uganda were very traditional. Also because we used to go to India so often, many decisions were still taken by my grandparents. That is why the moment my sister and me passed the school leaving exams, we were stopped from going for higher education and married off. So I was married at the age of 18.

My husband was 25 years old. He had his own shop and belonged to a very rich family. Unlike my mother I did not need to work though I wanted to particularly as it was quite easy for women to get jobs in Uganda. Also because I had not been allowed to go for higher education, I think I always had a secret desire to do something more with my life. But my husband's family was rich and traditional and so I was told quite categorically not to even think on those lines. So as was expected of a good Indian wife, I gave birth to four children in seven years. I had more than I could cope with in terms of bringing up my three daughters and a son. But as if that was not enough. In 1971 came Idi Amin's orders banishing the Indians from Uganda and so we left and came to London because we had British passports and we thought that India will not be able to provide us the life

style that we were used to in Uganda. But then we were also wrong about Britain and by the time we realised that it was already too late. Having to leave in a hurry we had lost almost everything. My husband was not educated or skilled having worked in a shop all his life. So with the very meagre savings that we had and drawing on some refugee benefits, we opened up a modest shop in London. But the returns were very marginal, particularly because we had to buy a house and educate all our four children. So at last my wish to work was granted. But I never thought that I would be almost forced by circumstances to find "any" job. My children were still very young, my eldest daughter was 15, the next one was 13, my son was 10 and the youngest daughter was only 8 years old. But as I had no talent or skill like my mother in stitching etc, I had to go out of home to work. Luckily I found a job quite close to our house, so I could come home for lunch and save on travelling, etc., and also take care of my children by getting back home quickly.

But then after twelve years of hard work, only by 1983 my husband started doing well and so we expanded the shop. I left my job at the juice factory to work at the shop. Finally our struggle of the last 12 years seemed to be paying off. And then my son got a job as a computer analyst and he became more or less independent. So now our main responsibility was to get our three daughters married. Fortunately we found good husbands for all our daughters with the help of our relatives. One daughter is married here in London and the other two are married in Birmingham. My son is also married. The girl he has married is from India. She is the niece of one of our very close family friends. My son does not stay with us. He lives in north London, closer to his place of work. His wife is not working at the moment [though she used to] because they have twins and so she needs to take care of them. I offered to help but they said no, they do not want to disturb our life and burden us [old parents] with responsibility for the young, though I have told them many times that I am now quite tired of working in the shop and that their father, that is my husband, will not mind my staying at home and taking care of my grandsons. In fact I hardly feel that I am a grandmother because our house with just me and my husband is so empty. We visit our children, daughter and son, on weekends only in the evenings after closing the shop or if they come, they come for a short while too and spend just the evening with us as all of us are working the next day, or at least me and my husband who go to the shop. Our shop is open seven days a week. I almost wish I was on a more regular job where I could retire at a certain age but here even when I feel tired and bored, I continue working because I think of my husband who

is older and working for me and our old age, to secure (*surakśit*) it as much as possible and to be able to leave something for our children and grandchildren. Whenever both of us feel tired, we just think of the days when we were so poor after coming to London and that is enough to keep us working because we never wish to face that anxiety (*becainī*) again or let our children or grandchildren suffer that, because after all we are outsiders in this country as well. What if we are thrown out of here some day, where would we go then? Will we face the same fate again? So, we continue to work our tired bones, suffer the loneliness of keeping away from our children and grandchildren only so that we are never again too helpless or dependent on anyone or have to wait for our fate to turn.

Jasvinder, a former teacher, spoke to me in mixed English and Hindi.

I am 68 years old but I certainly feel much younger. I have finished all my responsibilities and am now living on my own, doing what I want to do and when I want to do it. I really feel quite free for the first time in my life. But it was not always like this. This just happened since I moved into the council flat on my own. Anyway, I will tell you about this later. I was born in Kapurthala, Punjab. My father was a carpenter. We are Ramgardiahs. Though my mother did not work outside the house, she used to help my father - perhaps my mother was a better workwoman than my father. We used to stay in a joint family, a fairly big family as well. We were four brothers and two sisters. Now two of my brothers are no more but all of them were and two still are in Punjab, though in different towns. They all had their own business. My husband also had a furniture business. All my brothers and sisters did not study beyond VIII to X standard but I finished my school and then did graduation in arts and then started teaching in a school in Kapurthala. I was very happy, but then the moment I was 22, I was married off. My husband was 28 years old. This was his second marriage; his first wife had died during childbirth and the child had died too within two months. My husband was known to my family so his widower status was not seen as a problem. I was not very concerned myself. A year after my marriage, I had a daughter then a son after four years and yet again another daughter three years after my son. So I kept fairly busy in the first 10-12 years of my marriage, almost single-handedly bringing up my children because my in-laws were in another town in Punjab. Thus there was no or very little direct help from my husband's family members. But then in working outside the house and by managing all the house work alone, I became quite tough (*thos*). Anyway,

my married life was quite happy. My husband used to help only as much as an Indian husband usually helps, if at all. Only when I used to complain too much such as, for example, if we had a guest coming and I had to take care of my children, do all the cooking and also do some corrections for my class at school, I really used to get very angry, and then my husband used to help. Usually, however, I could manage the house work on my own. Actually I've always prefered working to sitting idle. Anyway, with God's grace all my three children did well in their studies according to what we could give them.

In 1975 my eldest son got an offer from a company here so he came here to work and also brought his wife and children along. He found a job for his younger brother and so my other son who had recently got married also came here with his wife. My daughter is a teacher in a school in Amritsar and her husband is a lecturer in a college there. In the meanwhile my husband had got asthmatic and also had blood pressure problems and one day he had a sudden heart attack [and died]. I was just 52 and still teaching in school. As I said, all my children had got married and both my sons were in London so I was all of a sudden left alone, but then one has to face all situations. I faced real loneliness when after three years I retired. My daughter and both my sons [from London] used to come and visit me but then I used to feel much worse when they would leave me and go back. Most of the time therefore I used to go and visit my brother and sister and their children but then they had their own life, I never felt too close to them. So when my sons asked me if I would like to come to London, I thought for some time whether I can take such a big step? Can I leave the place where I was born, studied, grew up, got married, had children, will I be able to leave all this and go and live my entire old life in an alien country? My heart was not really for it, but then, as they say in Punjabi, "blood calls" (*Khūn pukārtā hai*). I thought, why should I take care of and spend time with others' grandchildren when I have my own and then, thinking this, I came to London in 1982.

But then the moment I landed here I had to face the reality, which was that though my sons wanted me here, their wives did not. This my daughter-in-laws explained well to me through their manners (*dhaṅg*), attitudes (*vyavhār*), and talk (*bāt-cīt*) with me. So much so that one day my elder daughter-in-law said to her husband in front of me that since he has called me here he should serve me, why should she take care of me when she had explicitly refused to have me here. That was the day I decided that I will go back

to India instead of having to listen to a girl who was less qualified than me and much less experienced and clever. I had never lowered my self-respect (*atma-sammān*) for anybody and I was certainly not going to lower it for my daughter-in-law. Next day I told my neighbour about what had happened and my decision to go back to India, but my neighbour is one of the workers in this organization and she asked me what I will do when I get back, do I have any savings to be on my own, etc? When I told her no, she asked me if I would like to stay on state benefit by myself in a council flat in this country. I liked the idea because that way I would not have to depend on my relatives [here or] in India. So I applied for the flat and fortunately got it very quickly, within a year. And from that day onwards things became fine. Now I live alone in the Council flat. With the grace of God I do not have any major illness and as I am used to doing things by myself, managing alone is no problem. Now I do what I want to do, when I want to do. I go and meet my sons and grandchildren once a week or they come to meet me. I do feel lonely at times but at least my self-respect is intact. Anyway, on most days I come to the organization and have made a number of friends here and at the gurdwara where I go fairly regularly. At times I do think I should return to India but then [there is] the same problem of being dependent on somebody. At least this way if I spend very carefully I can go to India for a visit in three years. Here there are so many provisions (*suvidhāyeṁ*) for the old people and state benefits, what do we have in India? Here if I become physically dependent and my hands and legs stop working I will go to the Old People's Home, I am not embarrassed by that as long as I have my respect and honour intact. I will live on my own, let the children be happy in their own world. When the sons cannot control (*sambhāl sakte*) their wives how will they take care (*khyāl*) of their mothers? The only sad (*duḥkh*) bit is that I cannot spend as much time with my grandchildren. Almost my entire life till now, I have taught children and when it came to teaching my own grandchildren, I cannot, which is particularly sad. One needs to teach them about our religion and culture as they are growing up not only away from it but are being exposed to western culture all around them, in school and on T.V, etc. I know my sons and daughters-in-law do not do a very good job of that because they have very little time for their children anyway. So that is what I really feel bad about; the rest I tolerate (*sah letī hūṁ*). But as I said in the beginning, I do not yet feel that old, instead I am feeling free and younger than my age for the first time in my life.

2.2. Emerging themes

The above biographical sketches bring out the migratory experiences of six women which are similar in many respects to the experiences of the majority of women of both communities whom I interviewed. Indeed, there were few significant differences between the background details and general migratory histories of Gujarati and Sikh informants.

The first striking aspect of the lives of Gujarati and Sikh informants is that their biographies show the difference in their migration and settlement patterns in Africa and London.

2.2a. Migration and settlement pattern of Gujaratis and Sikhs in Africa and London

2.2ai. Migration and settlement in Africa

Four biographies in this chapter concerned women who had lived in Africa; this was common to almost 80% of my informants, more of whom were Gujaratis than Sikhs. The reason for this was that there were more Gujarati families than Sikh families in East African cities. More of the Sikh migration to Africa consisted of single male migrants in the years 1890-1930 (Helweg,1979; Ballard and Ballard,1977). Whereas the date of Gujarati migration to Africa cannot be fixed (Michaelson, 1979; Tambs-Lyche,1980) it definitely predates the large scale Sikh migration.

Consequently Gujarati migration was fairly well established by the early part of this century. The presence in east Africa of large numbers of Gujaratis from various caste groups, e.g Bhattia, Lohana, Bania, Patidars (Pocock,1957:291) had facilitated the emergence of various caste and community associations. Geeta, in her account of life in Africa mentions that her parents were active members of the Gujarat Sabha and the Patel Association.

Bharati has described several specific caste associations like the Lohana Mandals, Patel Societies, Visa Oshwal (Jain) Organizations, etc. (1967:303) and Morris has analysed the role played by these Associations based on caste lines in the Ugandan Indian

community, as being useful, e.g when parents wanted a list of eligible girls and boys for their children's weddings: these Associations maintained a list of their caste members and details of their families. Thus parents did not always need to go to India to find partners for the marriage of their children (Quoted in Mayer, 1967:8-10).

As Mayer says, "the separation of caste...occurred because of two factors - the influence of India, and the particular economic and political structure and needs of the Ugandan Indian community" (1967:10-11).

Geeta also mentions the presence of extended families in Africa, i.e besides the immediate family there were also the father's brothers and sisters.

Thus she and many others like her grew up in Uganda in an extended family environment and with familiar institutions which replicated the community's life in Gujarat, India. As Twaddle points out, agreeing with Ghai (1975:132), caste associations helped to safeguard personal identity in a foreign country (1990:155). Thus, most Gujaratis were "at home" in Africa, enjoying a standard of living greater than in Gujarat.

However, none of the Sikh informants mentioned having had any extended family networks or any caste or community associations in Africa. Their gurdwaras were the closest to any community or religious institution they had in Africa. Gurdwaras however did provide a place where Sikhs could meet.

2.2aii. Migration and settlement in London

The unstable political conditions in Tanzania and Kenya prior to their independence forced many Gujarati and Sikh families to leave those countries. But the major exodus of Indians from East Africa came in 1971 with the expulsion of all Asians from Uganda by General Idi Amin. Sikhs, who were either single men or with their immediate families, returned to India or migrated to Canada. Canada had been offering professional work opportunities for immigrants, but many more migrated to Britain. The Sikhs and Gujaratis who migrated to London were the ones who had settled in Africa as families (and had their parents with them) and, therefore, saw little reason to go back to India. Instead they decided to settle in Britain, because they all had British

passports.

When the Gujarati and Sikh families came to Britain in large numbers, the British authorities imposed several immigration laws restricting entry into Britain. These discriminatory immigration laws, as well as the problems which the immigrants faced in relation to finding good jobs and housing, convinced them that there was racism in the country, forcing most migrants to stay together as a group in selected residential areas in London (Patterson,1982:1-3). Wembley, Wood Green, Southall and Hounslow (places where I did my fieldwork) reflect their settlement problems and settlement pattern in London.

Once the migrants were settled in London, despite their relatively disadvantaged conditions, it was easy for them to invite their parents over from India, particularly when the parents retired or became dependent, as many women did upon widowhood. Although the British migratory laws were restrictive[3], many older dependent parents were given permission to join their children's families in Britain. As most Gujarati families already had their parents with them, it was mostly Sikh elderly parents or dependent widowed mothers who joined their sons and their families in London.

At this point we may question Francis' hypothesis mentioned earlier. We may recall the argument:

> The process of successful adjustment to old age begins early in life. Living within a domestic unit during childhood and learning the negotiated dimensions of family living are crucial....if one can have ongoing interaction with ageing parents - one can learn about growing old in a kind of advanced socialization. In many cases elderly parents provide appropriate models for successful adjustment in old age (1984:147).

If we go back to my analysis of the differences in the nature of migration of Gujarati and Sikh communities, we see that while most Gujarati families had their parents and elderly grandparents with them, and saw them growing old, most Sikhs did not. However, we may note two points in relation to the Sikh migration and their settlement

---

3. Under the 1971 Act, non-patrials were allowed into Britain only on a work-permit basis. This Act virtually ended primary immigration from the Indian subcontinent and the West Indies (Parekh,1986).

in London which reduces the extent of this difference: firstly, most Sikh migrants were joined by their older parents in London, and although they had not spent much time with them, did end up having their parents with them in their (children's) middle-aged years. Secondly, the Sikhs in Southall and Hounslow live as a fairly close and well-integrated community. As Dahya (1973) points out "it is hardly surprising then that these dislocated people chose at first to share households in order that they might establish the close supportive relationships which are vital to the fabric of village life" (Quoted in Hutnik,1990:8). Under these conditions, even if women do not have their elderly parents or in-laws staying with them, they are exposed to the lives of other elderly people visible around them, which may stimulate childhood memories of older grandparents within their families. This is because most of the Sikh informants came from a background of joint families in the villages of Punjab.

In fact, the other hypothesis, also mentioned earlier in the chapter, advanced by Fennel, Philipson and Evers (1988) holds more validity.

> There is great diversity in previous histories...[of] Asians who came many years ago either by choice or as exiles or as refugees and have grown old here. They have different expectations and experiences from those who came in later life or old age to join families already established (1988:123)

But what becomes important here is not the religious and linguistic distinctions between Gujaratis and Sikhs but the regional and experiential differences between the women who had come to London from Africa or from India, and growing old or older in London. Some of the experiential differences between women from India and women from Africa as enunciated by the biographies are as follows.

Firstly, the women from Africa had experienced migration and settlement processes twice. The migration from Africa for most had been a painful experience involving monetary losses. Many of these women had difficulties settling and adjusting to life in Britain. These women lived in limited families, with larger friendship and community networks.

Secondly, though this was not the case with the women coming from India, these women had suffered losses of a different kind, usually of husbands, thus coming to London as dependent widows. Though they did not have problems of settlement, as they

usually came to live with their son's family, they also had problems of adjustment in a foreign country, having to cope with an unfamiliar language and a limited family and social network, compared to their previous experiences.

The other major difference between the women from Africa and women from India was that women from Africa on coming to London had worked either by choice or to support the family income. Nevertheless they had been exposed to life outside the home and had relative confidence in their abilities to earn and secure their future. Also some of the retired ones had their pensions to provide economic security.

But the women from India came as dependents, and usually in their advanced years, making it difficult for them to work and secure their future economically. Thus they usually stayed materially and emotionally dependent on their son's family.

The other difference between the women from Africa and India was in the level of exposure to urban life. Life in African cities had given women the experience of living and adjusting to the demands of urban life. They had learned to adjust to the changes, despite the absence of wider family and kin network. Many had learned to speak Swahili and English. But women from India came to London straight from the rural areas of Gujarat and Punjab, with almost no exposure to urban life. Thus the extent of change and the consequent adjustment process for them was probably greater.

Fennel, Philipson and Evers (1988) are quite right in pointing out the nature of this difference. However, how far these differences affect the ageing process of Gujarati and Sikh women will be explored in the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Having thus accounted for differences in the nature of migration and settlement pattern of Gujarati and Sikh women in Africa and London, we see that a more important difference exists, not in their religious and linguistic experiences, but in terms of the regional divide based on the differences and similarities of their backgrounds and life histories/courses. This may, or may not, have a greater bearing on their ageing experience.

It should also be noted that in spite of the religious, linguistic and regional distinctions which differentiate the sample population, several common aspects in the lives of both

Gujarati and Sikh informants can be observed which are more crucial to understanding the response of women to their ageing process than that suggested by Fennel et al (1988).

2.3a. Women's perceptions of age

As stated in the introduction, the demarcating line has not only been the chronological age, but also the Indian *Āśramadharma* categorization, where one is deemed to be aged with the marriage of an eldest child and the birth of the first grandchild. Yet, interestingly enough, women expressed sentiments which made it plain that they had their own perceptions of "age", hence rendering ineffectual such categorizations as *Āśramadharma* or chronological age[4].

Age was perceived by some women to be related to "looks", which were seen to be affected by worries, sadness and ill health. Age was also related to "feeling", so that women felt a particular age. Feelings in turn were related to experiences.

For some women, experience made them feel and look older while others responded to their experiences in the opposite way.

Some women linked ageing to specific events in their lives, e.g the marriage of all their children, or the birth of grandchildren. That is, some women said that they felt old only once all their children had been married and they were free of responsibilities. Interestingly, the same points were made by some women who said they felt "young once again", because they were free of all their responsibilities.

However the birth of grandchildren made most women feel that they had entered the third stage of their lives.

An important criterion for feeling "suddenly aged" (at even a fairly younger age) was

---

4. Chronological age has been shown to be a poor predictor of a person's intellectual capacities, social behaviour, attitudes and lifestyle, physical condition and ability to work (Parker, 1982; Laslett,1989). Even generalisations which are true in a probabilistic sense - and many are not - are misleading when they imply a biological imperative and ignore the social causes (Arber and Ginn,1991:35).

"widowhood". Widowhood brought feelings of loneliness and dependency which were interpreted by some women as symptoms of old age.

Some women linked ageing to their "retirement" from work outside the house, because once again they felt dependent and lonely, confined more to the house. This agrees with Blau (1973) who argues that it is not the old age which affects work but it is the retirement from work which hastens the onset of old age.

Finally, there was a large section of women who perceived ageing to be based on their "mental outlook". If they felt tired and bored with life, they considered themselves as having aged, but if they could still work hard, be energetic, keep a positive attitude to life and not think of retiring, they felt they could keep young at whatever age.

Thus one sees the importance of self-perception as regards one's age. This fact becomes clear and of greater significance when we see that women's responses to various aspects of their ageing process are often based upon thier perceptions of their age - as will be seen in following chapters.

2.3b. Concept of "home"

When I began interviewing the Gujarati and Sikh women, I was assuming that when they said "home" (*ghar*), it referred to India, but that was not the case. Home referred quite explicitly to the place where one was born, unless the person had moved to another place within the first few years of her life and had not re-visited the place where she was born and therefore could not identify with it.

Associated with the concept of home is also the romanticization of home. Women coming from Africa would very often praise the people, climate, availability of greater and tastier varieties of fruits and vegetables, and generally the comforts which could be afforded in Africa. All this was compared to the dull and dreary cold climate of England, its bland food and the experiences of everything here. Women coming from India were generally nostalgic about the people and relations back home or the availability of servants to do a lot of house work.

Usually, such romanticization leads to high expectations based on an ideal notion of

home, which often causes disappointment when the reality of home is confronted. As was pointed out by the women, particularly in cases where men or women had lived in Africa and been exposed to wealth and comfort there, people found it difficult to adjust to India. Whether they returned there for personal or circumstantial reasons, in most cases India fell short of their expectations, particularly in regard to finding jobs or establishing businesses which could generate the kind of wealth and comforts which they had got used to in Africa. In most cases, therefore, expectations were not realised in the reality of practical life.

But it should be noted that this diminishing image of India did not detract from the values, tradition and culture of India which the women valued, as these linked them to their identity. It was this that formed the basis of their idealization of life at home, particularly when compared to life in the West, despite the fact that the West had more to offer in terms of comfort, money and social welfare benefits etc.

However, disappointment was also expressed about the migration to Britain. Many families, when they chose to move to Britain, or came to Britain from India, had envisaged a wealthier life in a developed nation. Few had anticipated the struggles, problems, losses and compromises they would have to make before and while settling in Britain.

2.3c. Experience of migration

In many cases women commented on the change they experienced when they migrated from India to Africa, or from Africa to London. The change was noted and commented on particularly in cases where the women had moved from rural life in India to urban life in East Africa. Khan (1979) notes that migration involved the telescoping of two major movements into one: the first was the migration from village life to big city life; the second was the migration from the East to the West, where the time-frame, the system of social relationships among people, and countless other cultural factors are fundamentally different to those of the East (she is referring to India and Pakistan).

Changes were also noted in cases where the women who, though not working in India, were either forced to seek employment or did it of their own volition in Africa and London.

Yet changes were seen not only in terms of migration. Women saw their life changing with widowhood. With the death of their husbands many of the women who were not working and had been dependent on their husbands now had to transfer their dependence to their sons (in most cases the eldest son first). In many cases this transfer brought anxieties into the life of the dependent, and in most cases accelerated ageing and sometimes also physical illnesses.

Migration involved changes which were expected, but which also brought pain, crisis and loss, associated particularly with migration from Africa to London.

The worst of the pain of migration was suffered by those who were expelled by Idi Amin in 1971, when most of the families left in panic, leaving much of their property unsold and belongings behind. Also the sudden influx of Indians into the U.K made it difficult for everyone to get the job of their choice and as a result many suffered hardships and tensions, and years of struggle before they could settle to a moderate living. In addition, the higher cost of living in Britain made everything in Africa look much easier and more comfortable, so a number of migrants experienced the pain of actual and virtual loss when they compared their present life in the U.K. to their past life in Africa.

Settling in the West for Indians has been a mixed experience. Coming to live and work in the U.K was quite expensive initially for many of the migrants, but when they compared the money that they got here with what they would get from jobs in India, their greater earning power convinced them to stay. Initially many intended to stay only until they had earned enough to ensure a good life on their return to India. Besides wanting to return home "where they belonged", many migrants did not see the West as a place where they could settle for life, or wish to bring up their children. Whereas none of the women expressed any anxiety about bringing up their children in Africa, there was concern about moral education while bringing them up in Britain. Britain was seen as the West, which implied the moral connotation of loose behaviour. It was conceptualised as a corrupting influence, particularly on growing children who were being exposed to it in schools or through television. Hence a much greater stress had to be placed on a child's religious and cultural education.

Older women who came from India saw any lack of attention and respect from their children as a mark of the influence of western morality. None of the women saw it as a reflection of their own inability to accept and adopt to the changes in the life style of their children in a western country. It was easy to be judgemental. Very few women made efforts to accept the changed reality.

2.3d. Notion of Identity

The lives of the six women discussed reveal two notions of identity - cultural identity and regional identity. The two are not mutually exclusive. While in Britain, many Indians feel the need to secure and safeguard their identity by ensuring the maintenance and perpetuation of their culture against the negative forces of western culture. This was not such a great issue in Africa, for Africa, while a foreign country, was not seen as a western country with a western morality. Therefore in London, Indian mothers try to safeguard their own identity as well as that of their community by ensuring its perpetuation through their children. In fact, in relation to Africa, women actually mentioned with pride their stay and generally better life-style there. Many classified themselves as "African Indians" (even when born in India) because an "African Indian" connoted a person who was urbanized and wealthy, having lived and earned well in African cities. More often the African regional identity, which implied urban and rich, was used to distinguish them from Indian counterparts who had come straight from villages in Gujarat and Punjab in India and who were referred to by the term "Indian Indian" (Bhachu,1985:29).

2.3e. Importance of background

Background factors, in particular education and economic status, mattered to a certain extent in shaping the lives of the Gujarati and Sikh women. From the biographical sketches it can be seen that most Gujarati and Sikh women were not well educated, nor had many of them worked outside their homes so that they were not economically independent. However, more Gujarati and Sikh women worked on reaching Africa, primarily because it was easy for them to find employment and the family usually needed the extra money to afford a better life style. But, working outside the house had become almost a necessity to afford a decent life style in the U.K.

Better educated women and those who had been working had a tighter control of their family life and were more confident. They stressed that their own incomes contributed to their happier married life. The extra money also enabled them to send children to private schools.

One of the major factors which affects a woman's life is her marital status, that is, whether she is married, or divorced/separated or a widow. A number of my Sikh and Gujarati informants were widows. Many women commented on how their life changed with sudden widowhood. This change was felt most in terms of their dependency status. A woman who was uneducated and did not work and was dependent on her husband, was left completely helpless on his death. Usually in Hindu traditional families the house in which the wife of the deceased lives is in her husband's name and is ceded to his sons to be retained or sold. The responsibility of keeping the dependent parent falls on the eldest son and many women in my sample left their homeland (even at a fairly advanced age) to be with their eldest son in Britain.

A number of women migrants from India came under this category, i.e dependent widows. The dependency was not always economic, but also emotional; there was a need to be close to a son who could give her a sense of security. In Indian tradition a son also lights his mother's funeral pyre on her death, in the absence of her husband. However, dependency does not come only with widowhood, it also comes with retirement in some cases.

2.3f. *Suḥkh* aur *Duḥkh*: Happiness and Sadness

There is a very fine line between *suḥkh* (happiness) and *duḥkh* (sadness). Having reviewed the six biographies which are typical of my Gujarati and Sikh informants, the overall impression (with few exceptions) is one of an overpowering sense of *duḥkh* in their lives. The line between *suḥkh* and *duḥkh* was drawn painfully in some cases with their enforced migration to London from Africa. Life in India, and more particularly Africa, was referred to by most of them with affection and happiness: where the climate was good, they were happy, healthy and wealthy. But their migration to London changed all that overnight. Here, they have had to struggle from the first day, with an increased cost of living, poorly paid jobs, bad climate, illnesses, racism, threats to their identity and moral values, and experiences of neglect, isolation and loneliness.

Thus, with notions of dependency are linked notions of security for the future, of loneliness and lack of company, of happiness and sadness. Most women were seen to be going through anxieties of various sorts. Some were seen to be coping quite positively; some were giving in and being very despondent, and some were leaving it to God and fate - but all continued living and ageing in London. It is how they were coping with these various issues in their life in their ageing years in London, which will be analysed in the following chapters.

2.3g. The Culture of complaint and role of reminiscence

Women complained of their lives in London and fondly remembered their lives in India or Africa. This introduces two central themes already noted in this thesis: the role of reminiscence, and what has been termed the culture of complaint. The two themes complement each other. Both sets of women, i.e the ones coming from Africa and growing old here, and the ones coming from India primarily in their ageing years but getting older here, had little hope of returning to India or Africa (wherever they considered home to be) primarily because they had their sons here on whom they were economically and emotionally dependent. Thus they were here to stay and age until they died, unless another political catastrophe expelled them.

Having faced problems and disappointments in settling in a western country, their recourse and escape was in reminiscing about their past life in Africa or India, when they were young, happy, healthy and wealthy.

This reminiscence also involves a process of temporarily denying their ageing and problems associated with it. It gives a sense of happiness to recall pleasurable times. Reminiscence can also be what Rudick describes as "defense mechanisms against (the) vicissitudes of ageing" (1964:32).

Women, as they aged, be they from India or Africa, felt a great responsibility in upholding Indian values, culture and tradition. They felt that the younger generation might be misguided by western culture if they were not reminded of their traditions. The strength of their rememberances and stress on traditions affected the Indian women's relationships and interactions with family members and society at large. Thus what

starts as reminiscence about past life and values becomes an obsessive reality to them. More so because they are in a foreign country where continued rememberance of their past serves to affirm and secure their identity. (It would be interesting to study how far reminiscence is used in the same way by Indian women ageing in India). However, while it does that, when reminiscence is combined with an idealization of the past, instead of being reviewed critically, women start believing in the ideal and eventually base their expectations on it. Such expectations based on idealization are difficult to sustain in the real world.

2.3h. Conflict between expectations and experiences

Thus the reality of their situations is a crucial factor, which is more important than differences based upon religion, caste, language, region, socio-economic background and migration histories, etc. Most Indian women when faced with the reality of life as a migrant in a western country respond in a similar fashion to the common issues which confront them.

In theoretical terms this is an important observation which shows that differences based upon normative variations are qualified by the situational similarity generated by daily life in a western country which affects all migrants.

As a migrant in a western country, women feel exposed to the unfamiliar, and to a morality which is viewed negatively. This necessitates safeguarding identities from such influences, and at the same time, securing a familiar world around them. It is in this light that tradition becomes important, for it represents familiar and positively viewed Indian values, which need to be affirmed in the climate of the negatively viewed western morality. Hence this leads to tensions between the two different cultures.

This explanation may also apply to other immigrant communities living in a western country, who feel similar threats to their identity.

2.4. SUMMARY

The aim of this chapter has been to record the migration history and experiences of Indian women migrants to London, whether they came with families from Africa in

their middle to advanced years, or whether they came as dependent widows in their old age. This difference between the two sets of migrants was stated by Fennel, Philipson and Evers (1988) as a possible way of understanding the differences in experiences and expectations between them.

Francis's (1984) model of the ongoing interaction with ageing parents as means of advanced socialization, also has shortcomings for understanding the differences between most Gujarati families who migrated to London and had elderly parents with them, and most Sikh families who did not.

But as the chapter has shown, the above views are only partially applicable because the differences in migration histories is undercut by the similarity of their settlement pattern in the U.K, as well as by the way in which various factors affect their lives in the U.K, e.g. their lives in a western country cause anxiety about their identity and security.

Therefore what becomes important in affecting their lives is not their migration histories, for migration has been painful in most cases and has involved losses, and it is only the degree and nature of the loss which is different.

What affects a woman's life more seriously is her educational level, employment experience and marital status, and this is crucial in determining her dependency status. For the greater the dependency and insecurity, the greater the need to cling to something familiar in her past. This is usually through idealization, which is generally unfulfilling as it often clashes with the experiences of daily life.

The importance of these factors in the ageing process, and the conflict faced therein will be analysed in greater detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III

EMPLOYMENT AND AGEING

3. Introduction

When I asked my informants how they would sum up their lives in London in one word, the single most common answer was "work". It was work which defined their lives, whether it was working outside the house or inside the house, irrespective of age and energy level or physical problems. This was an interesting answer for an ageing woman, particularly because "aged" and "work" are seen as contradictory, for old age is perceived as a state of withdrawal or disengagement from active life resulting in decreased interaction (Cumming and Henry, 1961). In ideal Indian context too, an elderly person is supposed to wean themselves from involvement with family and work and retire to life of religious worship and introspection (as a sanyāsī). But, since, most women see their life as a synonym for "work", I will focus on this issue. This chapter concentrates firstly on the work experiences of women outside their houses, primarily because this affects their work and status within their homes and families.

My informants were elderly women and most of them were retired or very close to retirement. Some continued working after retirement for economic and other personal reasons, in spite of having reached the official retirement age. Most of my informants record experiences of their working lives during the 1970s and 1980s in London.

The chapter, besides filling an important gap in the employment history and experiences of first generation Asian women in London, raises crucial theoretical questions for understanding Indian women's position in the employment world, and its effect on their ageing process.

This thesis suggests that women in their ageing years experience conflict between their expectations and experience, and this chapter shows how the women themselves become victims of this conflict, although "others" expect a traditional response from "them". In practice their real lives often contradict traditional role expectations, hence leading to conflict.

Ideally an Indian woman's world is defined as being inside the house and she is not expected to perform functions involving interactions with the outside world. Yet the reality of life in migration to advanced countries very often demands that she goes out to work to supplement the family income. Also, at times, the opportunities around her tempt her to cross the boundaries of traditional role expectations.

The questions then are: how and when does she cross the boundaries? Does she have any choice? What are the tensions arising from these changes? Is she helped in this conflict or left alone to face it? How does she manage stress? Is the change beneficial in the end? Does this experience of coping with conflict equip her to deal better with tensions within the family? Do these experiences have an effect on her ageing process?

Besides exploring the above questions, the chapter also tests two hypotheses which most of the literature on Indian women and employment is based on.

Firstly, it is shown by some studies (Westwood,1988; Bhachu,1988) that women's earning power has made them more assertive of their rights in demanding an improved status at work and at home. However the question here is, was this also the case with first generation women who had almost no exposure to work outside the house and almost negligible education? For many it was the first time they stepped outside their expected roles within the household. Were they able to learn quickly?

The other hypothesis suggested in studies of women and employment (Westwood,1988; Bhachu,1988) is that women's control over cash is central to personal feelings of independence. This I believe to be an over-simplistic view which misses or ignores all the tacit ways in which women assert their independence with or without directly controlling their earnings, as my study will show. The chapter also brings into focus the threats to the Indian male's notion of masculinity while highlighting added dimensions of an Indian woman's notion of her femininity.

However, as this study does not focus on contemporary younger people, there is no comparison of the working history of the two generations. This limitation has also prevented me from using much of the present literature on Indian women and their employment as references in my discourse. I have accordingly only commented on parallel studies where I found comparison with my informants' situations relevant.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first discusses the nature and experiences of employment of Gujarati women. The second discusses that of Sikh women. The reason for this division is explained at the beginning of the second section.

SECTION I

3.1.GUJARATI WOMEN: EMPLOYMENT AND AGEING

3.1a. Introduction

As stated in the Introduction, my fieldwork among the Gujaratis concentrated in the areas of Wood Green in north-east London and Wembley in north-west London. Wood Green looks like any commercial area in London, with a mixed ethnic population from the middle and lower classes. There is also substantial council housing within the area. Ealing Road in Wembley looks like a smaller version of the Ratanpor market area in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. One sees few people of any other nationality besides Indians (primarily Gujaratis). Ninety percent of the shops in Ealing Road are owned by Gujaratis, with 5% owned by other Indians and the remaining 5% by other nationalities and white people. This also reflects quite closely the demographic structure of the different ethnic groups in the immediate area (details in chapter 1.4).

For a general idea of the economic position of the Gujarati women in Wood Green and Wembley, the 1981 Census has been used, as it comes closest to being the peak period in terms of employment rate amongst the women informants. According to the 1981 Census, the economic activity rate for Indian women was 24.30% for married and 83.21% for single, widowed and divorced women in Brent and 6.7% for married and 92.93% for single, widowed and divorced women in Haringey[5]. This includes women who were doing private work at home and were self-employed in shops, restaurants, etc.

However, among the Gujarati women I interviewed there were differences in the

---

5. These rates have been calculated using the figures in the 1981 Census (Appendices G and H) divided by the percentage of Indian/Asian population in the boroughs.

employment rate, education level and the nature of jobs as between the Hindus and Ismailis.

In the previous chapter we saw that the Gujarati community in Africa was divided on caste lines and had their specific caste associations. Yet in the public sphere of work (which this chapter concentrates upon) it was the religious difference within the community, i.e among the Gujarati Hindus and Gujarati Ismailis which was thought to be more important by the informants. Gujarati Ismailis or Shia Khoja Ismailis, are the followers of Agha Khan. Bharati, writing about East Africa, comments,

> Ismailis form about 15% of the total Asian population. Without exception, they were Lohanas by caste, converted to Shiism about 200 years ago (Picklay,1940)....The Ismailis have their own places of congregation which they and the other Asians call the *Jamatkhana*, quite literally "assembly house" and they do not want it to be referred to as a mosque. In their ritualistic and religious behaviour as well as in their inter-Asian and non-Asian relations they differ from the other Asians in almost every way (1967:317). (For details on Ismailis, see also Hallam,1971:383-88).

These two religious groups, because they belong to the same state in India, Gujarat, are termed Gujaratis, but they follow different religions and speak different dialects of Gujarati. Standard Gujarati is spoken by Gujarati Hindus, whereas most Gujarati Ismailis speak a dialect of Gujarati called Kutchi as they come from the Kutch region of Gujarat. This difference in language/dialect and religion is important because Gujarati Ismailis are particular about making this distinction. During my interviews the Gujarati Ismaili women introduced themselves as either Ismailis or Gujarati Ismailis and when asked what language they speak replied "Kutchi". Even the Gujarati Ismaili families who came from mainland Gujarat and not Kutch said that they knew Gujarati too, but that they speak Kutchi because their parents and grandparents who came from Kutch have always spoken Kutchi at home.

These normative differences were mentioned as being actual differences, for, as one of the Ismaili woman, Gulshan, said, "We Ismailis are very different from Gujarati Hindus because our religion is different". Gulshan's sentiments were expressed by almost all Gujarati Ismaili women.

I asked Divya, a Gujarati Hindu woman, if she thought Gulshan was right, and she said,

> Yes, we are Hindus and they are Muslims, so naturally we are different. Most of them [referring to Ismailis] can speak Gujarati and most of us Gujaratis can understand Kutchi [though most cannot speak the dialect] and that is all we share really. We are closer to Hindus [referring to Hindus from other Indian communities] and they are closer to Muslims. It doesn't matter whether we are Gujaratis, we each behave according to our religion.

Thus almost all the Gujarati informants saw religion as playing an important part in shaping their behaviour and guiding their responses. This will be clarified as the chapter proceeds.

However, without going into the details of Hinduism and Ismaili faith and the debates regarding the position of women prescribed in the two religious orders, it should be noted that the informants found some differences to be salient.

3.1b. Views of women in Hinduism and Ismaili faith

Hinduism essentially defines a woman's role and position as primarily being confined to the household, taking care of her husband and children (Manu,I Quoted in Motwani,1958:87). Within the domestic sphere a woman is seen to have enormous influence and occupies a respected position as a mother, particularly if she is a mother of a son. She is also what Wadley calls an "invisible" religious practitioner (1977:130), and all of her rights are concerned with domestic well-being (McDonald,1993).

Rituals, however, do not exhaust the religious activity of women. They are the main upholders of tradition and are responsible for inculcating religious values in children, as well as teaching them religious observances, rules of purity, respect for elders, stories from the epics for the emulation of ideal Hindu characters, simple prayers and religious songs, and generally paving the way for the child to become a good practising Hindu (Mehta,1970:7-20).

The Ismaili view of Islam speaks of a more egalitarian relationship between men and women. That is, it does not specifically confine a woman's role to the domestic domain. Thus there is scope for her to extend herself beyond the boundaries of a house and work in the outside world, and to expect to be treated equally with men.

But most Gujarati women, Hindus and Muslims, have worked not only inside their

houses but also outside their houses (in paid employment), while some women have done paid private work at home. Almost all of them had to work in London. How far have religious differences been important, and what adjustments have had to be made are questions which will now be considered.

3.1c. Work outside the house

Of the 60 Gujarati women interviewed, 52 were Gujarati Hindu women and eight were Gujarati Ismailis. Of 52 Gujarati Hindu women, only 40 of them had worked in paid employment whereas all eight Gujarati Ismaili women had worked.

Tables 1 and 2 (though statistically not very significant because of the small sample size) have been put together to give an idea of the comparative levels of education and employment rates as well as the nature of jobs that Gujarati Hindu and Gujarati Ismaili women did in India, Africa and London.

TABLE 1.Education level and the employment status of Gujarati Hindu women and Gujarati Ismaili women in India, Africa and London

Educat-ion level	No.of GH*	GI*	Worked in India GH*	GI*	Worked in Africa GH*	GI*	Worked in London GH*	GI*	Continues Working GH*	GI*
None	10	1			1		5	1	2	
Primary	6				1		3		2	
VIII	4	1					3	1	1	
X	3	1				1	1	1		
Matric-ulation	6	2			2	2	4	2	1	
Graduat-ion	7	2	2	1	4	2	5	2	2	
Special Courses	4	1	1		2	1	4	1	2	
Total	40	8	3	1	10	6	25	8	10	
%			7.5	12.5	25	75	62.5	100	25	

* GH - Gujarati Hindu

* GI - Gujarati Ismaili

Table 2. Nature of jobs and the employment status of Gujarati Hindu and Gujarati Ismaili women in London

Jobs	Had worked		Continue working	
	GH*	GI*	GH*	GI*
Factory (assembling, etc.)	5	1	2	
Shop (sales - assistant)	3	2	1	
Packaging	2	1	1	
Cleaning	2			
Post office (attendant)	2	1	1	
Departmental Store (sales assistant)	2	2		
Teaching	2	1		
Child Minder	1			
Private work at home (Stitching, making savories, biscuits, cakes, pickles, relishes etc. to sell in shops)	6		5	
Total	25	8	10	

* GH - Gujarati Hindu

* GI - Gujarati Ismaili

Given the information in the above tables it can be seen that there is a higher education level and employment rate among Gujarati Ismaili women compared to Gujarati Hindu women. This has been explained in various ways, but a key factor is their comparative wealth.

Ismailis are followers of Agha Khan and are generally a rich community.

Gujarati Ismaili women can be distinguished from Gujarati Hindu women by their dress. While all Gujarati Hindu women only wear *sarees*, most Gujarati Ismaili women would be seen in western clothes, i.e. trousers, skirts and dresses.

While Gujarati Hindu women envied the Gujarati Ismaili women their ability to speak English, they usually scorned the Ismaili women's adoption of western clothing as a poor imitation of the West and a bad influence. It was also seen as an abandonment of Indian tradition.

However Gujarati Ismaili women took pride in these changes and explained them as part of their progressive outlook on life. Bharati explains this as a sign of the "modern" which he says is "equated with mixing more freely, with more liberty between men and women, and with more indulgence in tobacco, drink and the like" (1967:317). Its progressive and modern outlook was given as one of the reasons for the community being rich. The other reasons cited were: firstly, their involvement in trade and secondly, their sincere practice of the principles of Islam. They have a strong tradition of helping poor friends or relatives, thus uplifting each other and eliminating poverty or need.

Jamila summed up the features of her religion and position of women in her community very clearly:

> When I completed my schooling, it was understood that either I would continue further education or may want to work. We were seven brothers and sisters so, though we were well-off I felt a bit reluctant knowing that my father may not have that much money to support my University education for three years, but my mother knew of my desire and she told my father. One day my father approached me and said that he had arranged for the money through our family friend and so I need not worry and can go for higher education and that he will not listen to any

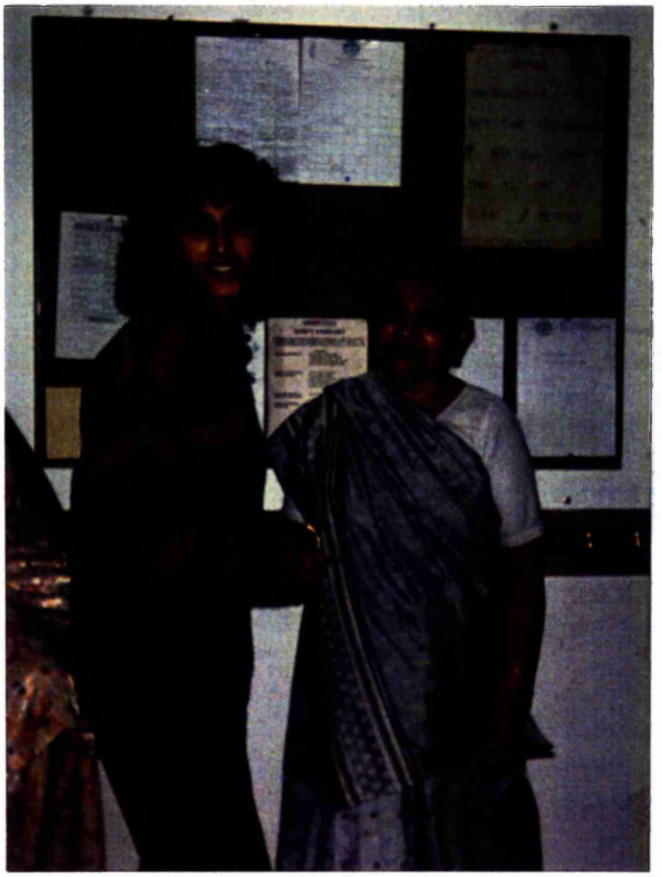
> excuses. In our community we generally help each other out so I was not surprised and did not feel obligated. Because if one day I had money I would pay back or help someone else. So I completed college after which I did not even have to ask my father whether I could work because I was not expected to sit at home after studying so much. So I started teaching in a school. When I got married and came to London, I found a teaching job in a school here. After retiring I devote all my time to religious teaching in the school for Ismailis. Earlier I used to do it part-time. Anyway, I think it's very important that we continue doing so and preaching the good points of our religion to our children. It is because of the way I was brought up - which was in line with our religion, that I have done so well and generally our community does well, only because we are careful to keep within the bounds of our religion - after all it is a liberating religion, not like Hinduism with its two standards for either sex; that is why you can see the difference between Hindu Gujaratis and us.

The last two lines of Jamila's quote should be qualified. While Gujarati Ismaili women did look and talk in a progressive manner and maintained equality with men, once inside their houses, they behaved in what appeared to be a "traditional" manner, similar to that of most Gujarati Hindu women.

Even in their ageing years, they were expected to carry on with all the domestic duties with little or no help from husbands or the rest of the family. When asked to explain this difference, a defensive response was usually "oh, my husband is very busy" or "he doesn't keep very well", but this also applied to many Gujarati Ismaili women themselves who were physically unwell and growing old.

However, moving on from actual or maintained differences within the Gujarati community to differences in the employment rates of Gujarati Hindu and Ismaili women in India, Africa and London - we need to explain, firstly why there was such a sudden rise of women in employment on coming to London, and secondly, what kind of changes that brought forth in their lives.

Some Gujarati Hindu women.



Ismaili social worker with an elderly Gujarati Hindu Women at A.W.F

Gujarati Ismaili woman in her shop

Group of Ismaili Women

3.1d. Hindu women and prohibitions on their outside work.

Wilson, talking about Asian women and their situation in waged employment writes of:

> ...an unstable and unacceptable situation full of conflicts and contradictions. Inside their families, too, their roles are in a state of flux, with the past, the peasant past and the colonial past each with its own particular prescriptions for the woman's role constantly intruding on the present. Out of these multiple fields of conflict the future of Asian women in Britain is being resolved (1978:15).

In other words, Wilson suggests that a woman's future depends upon the resolution of the conflict between her past and her present situation in the employment market in Britain.

My study agrees with this but it sees the importance of women's past is not so much in terms of their colonial or village backgrounds, but rather in the importance of the set of values and beliefs by which women were socialized and expected to behave.

This is clear in the following accounts:

Subhadra, a Gujarati Hindu who had worked for 40 years of her life in a juice factory and then a razor factory (because it was closer to her house), mentioned how she was forced to do this job in London. As a child she was not brought up with the aim of ever having to go out and work outside the house. She said:

> In our time, girls were not even educated so allowing them to work was a far cry. Girls were taught all the household chores but all the work outside the house was left to the men-folk. When I got married and went to Africa I did see some women going out to work but I did not have any courage to do that nor was my husband of the opinion that I should work, after all he also belonged to the same time when men were supposed to keep their women and daughters inside the house and provide for them. But then who had seen time? Time is very strong. When we had to come here leaving everything in Uganda then we realised poverty. Things were very expensive here and my husband's job here was very poorly paid. We also had to bring up our four children and had to set up our house from scratch. What could we do? I had to search for a job. My husband's friend's family had also come with us and that friend gave permission to his wife to work and also suggested the same alternative to my husband. So I got the job in the same factory as my husband's friends' wife and though it was poorly paid it brought in just that much more money which was needed for our family to survive and so we've

lived to this day.

Subhadra's statement highlights the fact that, faced with the reality of survival, women were forced to seek employment. They were expected to contribute to the household income as they were also expected to maintain their domestic duties. Expectations of women were increased. In all this they were given little or no choice, even in cases where they lacked educational or professional skills.

However there was the other group of women who could choose not to work, or who could keep to their expected domestic roles alone, but who chose to extend their boundaries and go out to work. These were the women who were educated and tempted by opportunities available to them to work in Africa and had taken up employment. The factor which facilitated this extention of traditional boundaries was not just that they were educated or had opportunities to work, but also the lack of traditional sanctions upholding cultural institutions, chiefly imposed by in-laws.

Nirmala, another Gujarati Hindu woman, who was fairly well educated and had worked in Africa summarises the general experience of this group of women.

> I had passed my Matric examination in Ahmedabad. It is true that in my time only very few women used to go out of the house to work but in big cities like where I grew up some girls were allowed to be educated. I was very fond of studies. But then studies do not mean employment, so when I got married I was not expected to work. However when after a year of my marriage I went to Africa, I saw many Indian women, both Sikhs and Gujaratis, working. Actually it was not difficult to find jobs there, especially for those women who were even slightly educated. And the biggest factor was the absence of in-laws, so there was no obstacle to work. So when I asked my husband he did not raise any objection as long as I understood that I would still do all the household work and bring up the children and not expect any extra help from him. And also, as I said, because his parents were not in Africa, he did not fear any interference or annoyance from them, and also most of his friends' wives were working too and then, who minds extra money in the family? I found work with the help of my neighbour who had become my good friend, and I started working in the same Department Store where she was working. It was then as if my entire life had changed. I used to enjoy my work even though I had to come home and do all the house work as well and so I used to keep busy 24 hours a day. But in that too I used to find a kind of freedom (*swatantratā*) and a sense of being self-supportive (*amārā pag ūpar ubhār rāhiye che* - standing on my own feet). In my childhood and adolescent years I had to do things according to my father's wishes; after marriage I had to be even more cautious and obey my in-laws; but in Africa, I could do a number of things as and how I

> wanted. Because of all this my personality changed somewhat and I gained a lot of confidence. I could also speak some English. I felt the real advantage of all this only on coming here. Because of my having worked in Tanzania and my exposure there, I found work in a very big Departmental store here. Because of the expensiveness of everything here my savings were next to negligible and it was a must to work here yet I never faced any real problem.

Unlike Subhadra, Nirmala had worked by her own choice, but like Subhadra, she had no choice when it came to her traditional role in the domestic sphere. There were no compromises made between her domestic chores and her additional duties outside the house.

For Nirmala, her education gave her the choice of working. However most Ismaili women attributed their choice of working to the fact that their religion did not confine them to the domestic sphere.

As noted in Table 1, none of the Gujarati Ismaili women did any private work at home. It is not because they lacked domestic talents but as explained by Sharmila,

> Why should we sit at home and work....our men expect us to do all the house work that is true but then, they cannot chain us, we can go out and work as long as we also do the house work. We are not expected to listen to men for all the wrong things. We do not worship him like a God as do Hindu women, we are supposed to be equal to men according to our religion. It's just that men have not done house work and do not know what to do and we as girls are usually trained on that front so we are expected to do that. But then we are also not forced to work out of home. It is our choice. I wanted to work and earn, because I wanted a better standard of living and wanted some money for my own spending. I did not want to ask my husband for all little things I wanted if I could get them myself.

Thus Sharmila was happy with her choice of being able to work and rationalised the expectations from her on the domestic front with the belief that men are not trained to work at home whereas women are. She did not question why women alone were trained in domestic duties if their religion did not uphold a distinction.

Thus the philosophy which said that women were not supposed to work outside the house was put to the test in the migration process as well as adapted and changed according to the specific backgrounds and situations of Gujarati Hindu and Ismaili women.

Nonetheless, the changes, as we have noted, did not extend sufficiently to change male expectations of women in their domestic duties. Women had limited or no choice and few compromises were made for them on the domestic front and even fewer on the job front.

Phizacklea (1983) has pointed out that though migration has brought women into the waged labour market, they are confined to certain sectors of the labour market, because they are women, (and) racial discrimination and/or legal controls intervene to ensure their subordination. She writes,

> The objective constraints on the nature of my women's work are overlaid and reinforced by the so-called "disadvantages" that many migratory women bring with them to the labour market....much is made of migrant women's `language deficiencies', `cultural preference' and 'lack of recognized skills' which are used as tools for exploitation, not just by indigenous employers but by male migrant entrepreneurs as well (1983:3).

This view is supported by Miles (1979), Warrier (1988) and Westwood (1988). Racism will be discussed in chapter VI but here we shall discuss the effects of these factors on the work experiences of Gujarati women.

3.1e. Experience at work (women working outside their house)

As shown in Table 2, most of the women had done manual jobs. Approximately 20% of the women had worked in factories primarily in assembling or packaging. These jobs were very poorly paid, except in one case where the woman had worked in an airline food packaging unit and though not very well paid had received perks such as free food and concessions on air tickets. Even the women who had worked in shops, stores and post offices as assistants, attendants, etc. had not been well paid. Two of the nineteen women had worked as cleaners at public lavatories on the Underground which was seen as a desperate measure (*koi cārā nahī̃ thā*). The reasons which had driven these women to such jobs and to stick to them were financial ones. In some cases, however, it was the boredom of sitting at home, and in two of the cases it was because all their friends and neighbours were also doing such jobs which made them decide that they could too. Two Gujarati women explained it in Hindi as *maiṁ bhī̃ is tarāh kā kām kar saktī̃ hū̃ṁ* - I too can do this kind of job. Another woman said "*maineṁ socā ki maiṁ*

kyoṁ nā yeh kām karūṁ mujhe bhī uske jaisī naukrī to mil hī saktī hai - I thought, why shouldn't I work? I too can find at least a similar kind of job to her's".

Thus while in most cases the decision to allow a woman to work was made by her husband, in some cases it was the woman herself who decided to go out and work, but even in these cases she had necessarily to seek her husband's permission and, at times, that of the rest of his family if she was staying with her in-laws. While the husband and his family played an important role in deciding whether his wife should go out of the house to work, he very rarely took an active part in helping her to seek the job. In other words, a woman was expected to make the effort to cross the boundaries of home that she was used to and she was to do it alone without help or support.

In most cases a wife was told that she needed to work and so she should try and pass the word around among friends, neighbours and relatives that she needed a job and the kind of job she would prefer. She was also advised (*salāh*) by her husband to check the newspaper (if the wife could read an English, Gujarati or Hindi newspaper) and to go to various places to check for vacancies. The most commonly read Gujarati newspapers were Garvi Gujarat, Gujarat Samachar and Hind Gujarat. Hindi and English newspapers were consulted by women only for jobs, otherwise preferring to read Gujarati newspapers.

Deepa, a Gujarati Hindu woman, described her husband's contribution in helping her seek her job.

> My husband used to give me a list of two or three jobs each morning after checking in the newspaper and he would tell me to go and check out these places. And he would tell me to take somebody with me - usually I took my neighbour, another Gujarati woman, she could speak a bit of English. My husband would usually tell me the kind of things I had to ask or conditions I needed to specify to my employer like no extra working hours or working on the weekends because I have children to take care of etc. So my husband would help me like this.

Evidently Deepa saw this as help from her husband and did not mind him not accompanying her to get more information on the jobs, or to the job interviews, or where she particularly required knowledge of English. In fact many women reported their inability to speak English as their biggest drawback in finding a job. Very often they could not be helped in this by either their family, friends or neighbours who

themselves were not very proficient in the language (Khera,1985). As a result many of them had to look for jobs in Indian-owned places, or where language was not an issue. The other serious handicap, after language, was the inability to travel long distances for a job, as they all needed to get back home as early as possible to take care of their children and cook for the family.

Two of the women said that for them the biggest problem in finding a job was the necessity of working only with other women: being a condition laid down by their husbands. One woman had to compromise by travelling for an hour each day to reach her work place, and another woman had to wait two years to find such a job in a sanitary towel manufacturing factory. Thus in London a woman was very often expected to work, at times willingly and at times un-willingly, and to contribute to her husband's or family's income, but was allowed to do so only on the terms and conditions imposed by her husband or his family.

The next question is, how did the women relate to their work? What were they learning and gaining besides money?

Indrani, a Gujarati Hindu woman, worked in a fruit packaging company. She was educated up to primary level but had no previous job experience in Africa, and could not speak very fluent English (she could understand it if spoken slowly). She had to work because her husband's salary as a post office clerk was not enough to support them and their three children in this country, though it was sufficient in Africa. She had the following to say about her work:

> I did that job only for money. From morning to evening we used to spend time separating and cleaning the fruits and packing them in boxes. I did the same work for thirty years. When I started work in that industry it was a very small one. There were two of us Indian women, two Greek and two English women. Our employer was an English man. He had a few other small businesses which meant that he was doing well and our fruit business was also doing well but then, we workers were paid very low. But worst of all was that we were being exploited in many other ways, like if we were late even by a few minutes an hour's money would be deducted from our salary, we would be asked to take short lunch breaks and we would not get any sick leave etc. If we ever protested he would shout at us publicly and threaten to kick us out of the job. We all needed money and we were also not very educated so it would be difficult finding other jobs; so we suffered all this quietly. We continued being exploited for six years during which time our business doubled and we all had to work so much more at the same pay. One day the two

> English workers approached us (rest of the workers) and said that we all must protest together and put forward our demands and demand to be treated humanely and if our employer does not agree we should threaten to leave. We all agreed yet first we wanted to ask our husbands and so we told them we will let them know in a day or two. That day after reaching home I told my husband of our plan and my husband agreed instantly saying that we had nothing to lose because anyway we were being paid so little and if we win we would only gain. So the very next day all of us women workers told our employer about our demands threatening that we would all leave. That really scared him and he grudgingly tried to coax us into reducing our demands but we were determined not to relent so he had to listen to us. That day was the turning point in our working life. We were now together as a group and felt closer to each other which made us enjoy each other's company much more. Our new found friendship with the English workers was good because now they would help us with applications which were to be filled in English and speak on our behalf to the employer in English. Also all our exploitation stopped and we got four new women on the job so our work load decreased. Our employer, seeing our strength and courage, behaved himself and we maintained a very professional relationship with him. Thanks to this change in the work atmosphere I stuck to the same job for thirty years.

MacKinnon (1979), Hadjifotiou (1983) and Sedley and Benn (1982) have described various such cases of sexual harassment, which they see as related to sexual discrimination against women at work. These writers have, therefore, stressed on women the need to be aware of their legal rights and how they can cope with such problems at work.

In contrast to Indrani's case quoted above, Sushila, a Hindu woman had faced not just sexual discrimination but sexual harassment due to her race. According to a worker at the Asian Women's Forum who first saw her when she first visited the Forum, Sushila was a "nervous wreck". Sushila had turned to the Forum for help and advice because there was no trade union body to turn to at work. Sushila was a very shy person, which incidentally was a key factor in why she suffered from sexual harassment until it became almost impossible for her to bear. Sushila broke down while telling me about what had happened many years ago which had made her first come to the Asian Women's Forum. She said:

> It still hurts to even think about it. You see that day I was late by only ten minutes because of the train stopping in its tracks due to signal failure. My boss, an old English white man humiliated me so much that day. He said lots of horrible things about how Indians are always late and slow at work etc. which was not true at all. We were usually the most punctual and certainly the most hard working in our group. He was

> prejudiced and discriminatory (*bhed-bhāv*) because he would never say those things to any English woman even if she was half a day late. Anyway he said that I will have to work for half an hour extra or he will deduct £20 from my salary. I felt very angry because I knew exactly what he would do with me, but I agreed. We Indian women have no choice (*majbūrī hai*). He had physically harassed almost all the Indian women. Men do not have to worry about this. They even get jobs more easily. We, women cannot go and work very far from our house because of our family and child responsibilities but we must work, so we have to tolerate this. The ladies who were working with me and who had worked elsewhere earlier, told me that English employers always exploit Indian woman workers like this meaning sexually harass. The men at home know this but one has to work and so bear all this. Only when it becomes too much do we see what to do, like on that day. The moment all the workers left the factory my employer came up to me and forcefully kissed me (earlier he used to touch me at various places but never forced himself on me like that). Before that day I used to get nightmares about all these things at work but somehow could manage to work ,but that day I just cried and cried that night. When I told this to my son who saw me crying uncontrollably, he suggested that I come and see the women in this organization. And the workers here really helped me. I got another job and my boss was sacked from his job but I did not go back there.

In the above cases, a point to note is that Indrani agreed to stand up against the injustice only after seeking her husband's permission, while Sushila was asked to do so by her son. In other words, though women had entered waged labour, they were still expected to articulate their concern through "traditional idioms".

Roger Ballard, writing about the Sikh community notes the same. He says that the waged-based "...economic environment may lead to considerable changes in behaviour, without necessarily affecting the moral and jural norms of the community" (1973:13).

However, at the same time that men were increasingly concerned about women's engagement with external wage labour and the threats that this was perceived to pose to Indian notions of femininity and masculinity, moral and jural norms were being relaxed to meet these contingent changes.

The studies on women and employment which talk about the women being able to stand up for their rights (Westwood,1988; Warrier,1988 and Bhachu,1988) do not go far enough in exploring how far women do this on their own, or only after they have their husbands'/families' permission, i.e within the moral norms of their tradition. In many cases of confrontation with management, a woman might be risking her job and the

income which she earns for her family. Is a woman today able to separate the domestic and outside world? Can she distinguish between the real world and the expectations placed on her?

While for Sushila, her first job had proved a nightmare, for Disha, another Gujarati Hindu woman, her job was the only pleasure in her life. Disha worked in her neighbour's shop, and she spoke about the unique events which had led her to this job and how it had saved her life and marriage.

> As I told you, I got married and went to Uganda. I was completely uneducated but in those days that was no problem. I was not expected to work, in fact I would not have been allowed to work even if I wanted to but then, when we came to London after having lost almost everything in Uganda, all that changed. Now I was not only expected to find work but was being forced. And as I said, I was completely uneducated, I had no knowledge of English and I had no skills, but worst of all I was a very shy person. When we came to London, my mother-in-law was with us and she was only around 45 years old which means that she could have got some job if she had wanted, but then why would she trouble herself when she had a daughter-in-law. So everyday I had to listen to scolding and abuse from my mother-in-law and husband for not trying to find a job but nobody would understand my fear. At times my husband would even slap me and if I would say what work can I, an uneducated woman, do? He would say that I could find cleaning jobs. But I was a Brahman and what would people say back at home [in India]. One day my husband scolded me very badly and turned me out of the house saying that he would not allow me inside the house till I had found a job. I cried and begged him to let me enter the house and said that I will find a job but he refused. My neighbours who heard and saw all this came up to me and took me to their house and heard my story. Next morning they offered me a job in their own small corner shop. My neighbours were a Sikh couple who had also come from Africa having lost their belongings in the Ugandan expulsion and had started from scratch in London and so worked very hard. I can never repay their kindness to me. My neighbour's wife actually gave up her job at the shop and instead went to work in another shop[6] so that they could pay me well. So they saved me from shame (*śarmindagī*) and also saved my marriage though after that time my marriage was only in name because I could never feel much love or respect for my husband. I stayed with him only because of my children. From my first day at work I decided that my work will be my life and my life will be my work and I will try and repay my neighbours' kindness by giving my best to the business. But then I genuinely began to enjoy my work. It was great meeting new and old customers. My neighbour had also taught me some English. Suddenly I could see that I enjoyed selling and was a good sales-woman. I also started discovering a business mind in myself, maybe my Gujarati blood[7]. When in the

6. It was comparatively easy for her because she could speak English.

> coming five years the shop started making a very good profit I suggested opening up a restaurant of Punjabi and Gujarati food, which my neighbours/employers agreed with. The restaurant was in the care of my neighbour's wife and myself and we did a good job. Now after twenty years my neighbour's daughter-in-law has joined us and so we get some respite and that is when I come for the *satsaṅgs* (religious songs) to this organization[8], like today. But I love my job and enjoy working however tired.

Thus the experiences within a job and what each one gained from it depended to a large extent upon human and circumstantial factors, plus her own personal response to her job, rather than religion as Gujarati Ismaili women liked to claim. However most Gujarati Ismaili women emerged as fairly confident persons compared to the Gujarati Hindu women because most of them had worked previously in Africa and more of them could speak English, so they did not suffer similar anxieties about being able to get jobs in London. With this level of confidence, and more open support from their husbands, and the absence of the fears and anxieties of having to do any job just to make ends meet, they did not suffer exploitation at work. Whenever they found events oppressive, they walked out and found another job.

Nafees, an Ismaili woman, described her experience at work to me.

> I had trained as a library scientist and had worked as such in Kenya. When I got married and came here I was offered a job in a local library but at a fairly junior level. I took it up thinking that at least it's closer to the house and so I will save on money and tension in travelling everyday to work. For the first year of my job everything was O.K but then in the second year, our library in-charge, an English man, started finding faults with my work and making me unnecessarily do things over and over again. He also started making some racist comments while swearing and pretending that he was saying it in private but I knew that he was doing it deliberately like the faults he was finding out in my work. I wondered why all this and then I was told by other library staff that he wanted his friend's daughter to join in my place. So I stuck to my guns, I told my husband and he asked me to quit but I wanted to stand up to the wrong. Then one day he tried to get physical with me and that was it. I slapped him and walked out. He dared not report me because he knew he was in the wrong and also that I was the kind who would report back. I told this to my husband and said that I was going to report. But my husband said no, I should quit because he did not want me or us involved in any legal hassles for it may come to that and after all we are immigrants in this

---

7. Gujaratis perceive themselves as having particular skills in trading (Tambs-Lyche, 1980).

8. Brent Indian Association which has *satsaṅgs* for ladies on Mondays and Saturdays each week.

> country. I still regret listening to my husband and quitting the job but I did that because I too personally wanted to avoid legal hassles. It was a kind of victory for my boss but I knew why I had done it. Two months later I found another job - a better job in a library not so far away because the least the boss could do was give me a good recommendation letter for I made it clear to him that I knew what he was doing and for whom and that I was the one saving his neck. But then I could do that only because I had no financial worries and my husband was supporting me to quit or else I might have had to put up with all this. So that is what made me very strong. And it was my strength which got me this job as a worker in this organization[9], because you need strong women to be able to deal with the problems of our Asian women and so that we can also show through our personal example to these women the need for strength. This is perhaps the single most important failure in our Asian women.

Thus it was not so much the religious factor but the lack of financial worry which made Nafees's husband support her and enabled her to "be strong" and walk out of her job.

3.1f. Women doing private work at home

Of the six Gujarati Hindu women who were doing private work at home, four of them were working at home because of having no choice. Only two said that they personally preferred to work at home, primarily because their skills were more suited to working at home making savouries, cakes, biscuits, pickles, etc. as well as the fact that they lacked professional skills to be able to get well-paid jobs, and on the single income of their husbands they were not able to afford a baby-sitter for their children. But fortunately these two women had skills which many women did not and did not have to resort to poor paid jobs outside their houses.

Out of the four cases where the women had not been allowed to go out to work, in two the refusal had come from the husband (even though the in-laws were present there too) and in the other two from the in-laws because, as these women explained, in their higher caste families women were not supposed to work outside the house. If others were doing so, they were doing wrong. As one of the women said:

> My husband told me, we would rather die of starvation than have me going out to work....It was only when we were having real financial problems after the birth of our third daughter that my husband allowed me to take up some private work at home so I asked my neighbour who

---

9. Asian Women's Forum.

did some private stitching at home. She spoke to her employer and got me the job of stitching skirts. My skirts go to Marks and Spencers.

Here again, like the women who had worked outside their house, these women also had to find work by themselves or with the help of their friends, neighbours or relations who were either working at home or knew women who were doing such work and could recommend them to their employers.

Finding private work was not very difficult, for the women did not usually need social or language skills and could work for little money because they needed the job on their own terms (or rather their husbands').

One of the biggest disadvantages raised concerning private work at home was the poor remuneration. In some cases the women had white employers but many had Indian or Asian employers, and all would exploit equally. According to the informants, it was because the employers knew that the women needed the job, and because the employers were also familiar with Asian women's limitations and knew there was no organized body such as a trade union to protect their working rights, that they continued the exploitation. They gave the women less money for their work. Although these women did not suffer other kinds of exploitation at the hands of their employers, nor had the trouble of travel, being cheated of their rightful pay for their work annoyed many. Most women wished to be able to go out and work because they resented the confinement at home which their job entailed. They said that they did not feel as if they really had a job. As they were not going out they were not treated by others as if they had a job despite being busy and working equally hard. Also they greatly missed being able to go out of their homes and socialise with other women at work, and learn from the exposure to the outside world.

Five out of the six women, even though they had passed the official retirement age, continued to work though they did take a lesser load. Yet all wished that they were in a proper job so that they would have retired at the right age and nobody in the family would have expected them to continue, as was seen to be happening in their cases.

One of the women speaking about this, remarked:

The other day my son said to me, "*Bā* (mother) you can't possibly give

> up your job, you still do such a neat job at stitching....your eyesight may be failing but you can do a good job even with your eyes closed, you've worked for so many years....just take it easy but don't give up, what will you do in the whole day otherwise?". I never thought that my son would say this - after all, who does all other things at home, I have so much of house work to do besides my job and he had no sensitivity for my bad eyesight....anyway I just swallowed all that and have continued working...if that is what my family wants.

For women doing private work at home, though they had the flexibility of working hours, their decision to work was often involuntary and the gains were almost negligible. A woman in my sample who stitched men's trousers for a leading company in Britain was being paid 60 pence per trouser, which involved cutting, stitching, putting zips and buttons and ironing. Another woman who stitched skirts and shirts was paid between 50-70 pence per skirt and shirt depending upon the design and material. Another woman who hand-knitted sweaters got £4 for a plain sweater and £6 for a designed one. For machine-knitted sweaters and jumpers a woman got 80 pence - £1 depending upon the company she knitted for. Thus work rates of individuals varied but in many cases one to three items a day were produced giving a woman an income of £2-£3 a day.

3.1g. Changes in the status of women due to work

In following the experiences of the two sets of women - those going out of the house to work, and those doing private work at home - the changes in the status of working women can be traced.

Eighty percent of the working women in my sample, at home or outside home had to work for economic reasons. In other words a good part of their salary was used in running the house. Even where women earned more than their husbands, they were not considered as bread-winners. Their income was treated as supplementary to their husband's income (Phizacklea,1983; Warrier,1988:148).

Sallie Westwood stresses this:

> Women are viewed not only as wives and mothers but also as wage earners who can contribute towards the household budget and to family projects like business ventures. This is a very important understanding because it views waged work for women as an extension of familial

roles, not as a source of independence for women (1988:120).

In my study there were some cases where a woman's husband had lost his job for various reasons. These were sad cases for men because with the job loss was linked the loss of their pride and masculinity, as a man feared that his position in the home would be usurped by his working wife (Helweg,1979:64). This created a lot of tension in many households and added to the sufferings of many women in their middle-aged years.

In some cases where women earned more than their husbands, they had actually been asked by them to leave those jobs, on the grounds that these were not considered suitable. In some cases, women reported their husbands' having become "depressed and disturbed" if they earned less pay than their wives.

In one case a woman said, "my husband used to tell me `you are the man in the house, because you are getting the money [i.e. more money], so you decide'". Thus earnings were linked with the notion of masculinity. Generally men might accept this change but only where their parents and relatives were not in this country to check the truth. In such cases, male wage inferiority was totally unacceptable to them, as they were afraid to lose face in front of their family and community.

This partly contradicts Warrier's findings that men did not believe that their own roles as "bread-winners" were in any way threatened by their wife's earnings primarily because the wife's work was considered as a "short-term arrangement" and their earnings were viewed as "supplementary" to the men's earnings (1988:148).

However supplementariness of their earning was emphasised in most houses through the absorption of the female salary into a joint account with the husband. Some women did not even have personal accounts as they had handed their entire salary to their husbands who put it in their accounts. The husband'sthen gave them money to run the house or for their personal expenses. Only two out of twenty five women mentioned that they had a separate account though they also had primarily used their salary for running the house.

Thus most women seemed to have had very little or in some cases absolutely no control over their earnings. In a very few cases, over a long period, women could save some money which was often almost entirely used for their children's weddings.

Even among the Gujarati Ismaili women, who were on better paid jobs and seemed more confident than their Gujarati Hindu counterparts, this did not necessarily give them greater economic freedom. Although four out of eight Ismaili women interviewed had separate accounts and could spend a part of their earnings on themselves, most of their earnings had still been used for their family, home and children. The other four women who had joint accounts with their husbands had ended up spending their entire salary on the family because they said that together with their husbands' and their own salaries, were just about enough to run their house well. Also these four women had families of four to six children. Thus women could enjoy the independence of their earnings only if they had fewer domestic responsibilities.

Thus, on reaching old age, these women who had worked almost their entire lives, had very little or absolutely no money saved for themselves. They had to rely totally on their pensions for day-to-day living.

My findings here support Warrier who studied the role of marriage, maternity and female economic activity among Gujarati women in Britain. She writes, "Few women in my sample, however, regarded paid work as a liberating experience, and the income they earned was, in most cases, utilised for the benefit of their husbands and children" (1988:141). The question then is did women have any economic independence at all? If so, what kind of economic independence did their income produce?

Eight of the women echoed Subhadra's sentiments.

> Though my earnings went into my husband's account and I had little or actually no economic independence (*ārthik swatantratā*) in that sense, no control over my earnings, but I still felt a sense of freedom because I knew that I was not dependent upon my husband. If he mistreated me or anything and I wanted to leave him, I could do so because I was earning and could support myself. He could not control my earnings then. So I felt secure (*surakśit*) and independent (*swatantra*).

Here Subhadra's distinction between economic independence (*ārthik swatantratā*) and liberation or independence (*swatantratā*) allows her to transcend the over-simplistic conclusions drawn by Warrier.

For some women freedom was linked to the ability to go out of the house to work, and

to socialize with other women and make friends with people outside their family and community. Thus many women saw their work outside their house as liberating whether they directly controlled their earnings or not. However this avenue to freedom was denied to women who did private work at home.

We must also note that several women, though they shared joint-accounts with their husbands or had given their entire salary to their husbands, did not actually resent the fact, because they had not been restricted in spending the money by their husbands. If they did not spend their earnings on themselves it was more because they were careful about using their wages, usually taking into account their responsibilities. Some women pointed out that even their husbands were careful about spending their own earnings. So they never felt any reason to complain or feel that they were being cheated of their rights over their wages.

Women, as a result of their earnings, were beginning to view their feminine role as relatively more liberated than it would be in India, or compared to that of the women who were unable to work. Thus the hypothesis which equates direct control over cash as being of prime importance for personal freedom was not borne out by most of the women's personal experiences. This hypothesis was, however, valid for a very small section in my study who expressed resentment because their salaries had gone to their in-laws accounts, or where they had been questioned and made to account for every penny spent.

However the greatest change due to the working status of women was to be seen in their family lives and relationships which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Having considered the relationship of women to their work, the next relevant question is, what were the effects of the earning status of women on their ageing process in the later years of their lives? In theoretical terms, did the tension that women faced (and adapted to) in the domestic and outside world between their expectations and the realities of daily life equip them to deal better with their ageing process?

According to Sarla:

> Nothing changes with age. If you are working, you continue to work. All that changes is that your strength gets low and commuting to work seems

> a bigger task. Also by this time your family members multiply with the marriage of your sons and coming of daughters-in-law and the birth of grand children, etc, so the work at home increases. Even where the son starts earning, and his wife earns too, there are more mouths to feed and you can't say that now you will save and you will stop working. Your need keeps growing. So, old or not, you work till you can or you are allowed by the government to work. Age changes have very little effect on your work or what you can do with your money, you continue to spend it all on your family.

Some women felt they needed to work until all their children were either in jobs or at least all their daughters married (for which they possibly had to give dowry), i.e until all their financial responsibilities were directly over and they could support themselves on their pensions.

However according to Divya, if a woman is working when she has a daughter-in-law in her house, she can command greater respect, especially from her daughter-in-law. Also she can insist that the daughter-in-law (particularly where the daughter-in-law is not working) take over the household chores. But if the daughter-in-law is working also, then a mother-in-law usually has to share the household chores otherwise she usually ends up in the role of *ayah*/baby-sitter for her grandchildren. This, and other aspects of the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship will be discussed in detail in chapter 4.3d.

In eight cases women had been asked by their sons to take pre-mature retirement from their jobs because they needed an *ayah* for their children, as they could not afford one on their salaries. Thus women as grandmothers were expected to and often did switch their paid jobs outside the house for the unpaid job of a child-minder for their grandchildren inside the house.

However, some women, having faced the tension between expectations and experience, were wiser. They were effectively able to say to their sons that they would not leave their jobs because they needed the money to get their daughters married, unless their sons were willing to take over that responsibility from them. In all these cases the sons retreated, preferring to pay for a baby-sitter, rather than take on the responsibility of arranging the marriages of their sisters, or sharing the responsibility with their mothers or parents.

These women were quick to point out the change "that has occured with time and place" as they saw it. According to them, in their time, i.e when they were living with their in-laws, they had, with their husbands, given their entire salaries to them (in-laws), and had lived on allowances received. Today the young generation likes to keep their salaries, as they usually set up separate houses from the parents or at least have aspirations to do this. The excuse they give is that their salaries are not even enough for their own families, so they are unable to contribute to their parents to relieve them of some of their responsibilites and financial burdens.

Thus women's wages are seen as owed to their family, with little or no help being received from earning children. However, in cases where women's daughters were working, their mothers or parents would not touch their children's salaries. Among the Hindus the belief is that daughters belong to their husband's family (even before marriage), and that she is like a gift which is kept in her parents' house until the owner claims her. Therefore her earnings are not to be touched by her natal family. Traditionally girls were not even allowed to work, but now that they are working, and where their parents are not wealthy, a modern compromise is reached. In such families, working daughters are asked to save their salaries for their marriage. Their savings are then used to buy them gold jewellery sets, clothes, household items, etc. which are given as part of their dowry.

Therefore while many women in this stage of their life complained of various ailments, e.g failing eyesight, fatigue, arthritis, etc. they felt they had to continue working because their earnings were still needed for fulfiling their responsibilities or for meeting the demands of their expanding families.

This we may note is completely opposed to the traditional notion of women managing only domestic duties which are supposed to grow lighter with age, particularly with the enhanced earning status of their sons. But the above are changes demanded by the reality of life in the U.K.

Unlike for the women who had gone out of their house to work, for the women who had been doing private work at home, not only is their position at home taken for granted, their income too is taken for granted at whatever age or stage of the life cycle they may have reached. And if they have daughters-in-law who have been going out to work and

earning more than them, they have very little chance of negotiating a favourable position for themselves on the strength of their working and earning status.

However, what happens when the women working outside their homes retire? How is retirement perceived by them? How does retirement affect their ageing process?

3.1h. Retirement (official retirement from work at the age of 60)

Most studies in relation to ageing and retirement have focused on retirement among men (at least written from that perspective). Very few studies on retirement among women that are (Dex, 1985; Bernard and Meade,1993) sees women's experience of retirenent as affected both by their position in labour market and ideologies reagrding their role as carers (Bernard and Meade,1993; Dex,1985). And there is to my knowledge no study that looks at retirement among Asian or Indian women workers in Britain.

My study identified varied responses to women's actual or impending retirement from work. These responses were more often based on a woman's initial choice to work, her experiences at work, the changes within her family life due to work, her physical health in advancing years, her need for money, and socializing etc.

Most women who had been working outside their homes acknowledged feeling a sense of relief (*bojho utāri gayo*) on retirement. These women had clearly been made to work through economic necessity and had not at any point enjoyed working. It was something they had had to do to manage their family. They felt a sense of relief at retirement.

Two of the Gujarati women said that they felt a sense of "satisfaction" (*saṅtoṣ*) at retirement. When questioned about it, one of the two women explained it succinctly, saying, "when one reaches that age (meaning age of retirement) one should feel completely satisfied. There should be a sense of achievement (*pānā*) and of contentment (*saṅtoṣ*) and of being fulfilled (*pūro*). That is real retirement and that is what I feel". Thus, for some, the actual event of retirement was associated with a sense of relief, satisfaction, contentment and fulfillment.

These women were also observed to be happy to retire and devolve their household duties and responsibilities in favour of their daughters-in-law. The reason was because they held a traditional view and were happy to retire from household work and responsibility.

But this is not to say that they could do so completely, for in practice, it was difficult to separate the household duties of women where they were still living in families. If they saw work to be done in the house, they would do it or, for example, when their grandchildren came home from school, they would give them food, etc. whereas their husbands would not do these things on retirement as their domain was always outside the house. From this evidence, it is possible to conclude that for women, it is difficult to completely renounce in practice (even where they want to), their household duties and responsibilities where they continue to stay within the family.

While women may match their husbands in work outside the house, they could not match the freedom which husbands enjoyed on retirement inside their house. Thus ageing for both men and women was perceived and experienced differently. But, from the male perspective, this could also mean that with retirement men felt a greater sense of role loss and disengagement compared to women. This is an issue worthy of future research.

In the case of the Gujarati Ismaili women (Table 1), we can see that none of them worked after retirement, although three out of eight were involved in voluntary part-time religious teaching at the special religious school for the children of their community. For all of them, retirement was looked forward to because they were either firstly, tired and wanted to be able to stay at home; secondly, wanted to spend more time with children or grand children; thirdly, wanted to be able to give more time to prayer or religion; fourthly, wanted to relax and do as they desire; and fifthly, no longer needed the money and so were satisfied and saw no reason for putting up with the daily strain of commuting and work.

But for some, retirement brought various anxieties. Two of the women said that they felt as if now they were really old. They were considered unproductive and this made them very depressed. They started feeling unwell because earlier, while they worked, they never had time to worry about illnesses which now they had all the time to reflect

upon. This again seems to justify Blau's (1973) argument that it is not the old age which affects work but it is the retirement from work which hastens the onset of old age [even for women].

For many women their anxieties were related to a feeling of isolation, not being able to go out of the home and interact with friends at work everyday; for some it was as if their freedom was being snatched from them. We saw previously that some women, even where they did not have actual control over their earnings saw it as liberation and freedom to have earning power. They saw that as being taken away from them with retirement, so they started attaching great significance to their pensions and social welfare benefits, which relieved their anxieties somewhat and provided them with a measure of security and freedom as had their earning power.

A more serious kind of anxiety was felt by those women who still needed financial support because, although their husbands were retired or were not working, they still needed money to arrange marriages for their children or pay medical bills. Three out of the 19 women on retirement had taken private work at home only for financial reasons. Only one of the women had taken it up because she had a hobby, painting, which was commercially profitable.

Jyoti, now 57 years old, usually painted on paper and sometimes cloth. The paintings were largely of Hindu Gods and saints. The most common were Lord Krishna and Jalaram Baba (these two are also the favoured God and saint of the Gujarati community). She had also painted the Hindu temples of India and Britain. Her other paintings were of famous Indian traditional figures, be they heroes of India's independence struggle, like Mahatma Gandhi (father of India's freedomstruggle and a Gujarati from Saurashtra) and Vallabh bhai Patel (a Gujarati freedom fighter who later became free India's first Home Minister) or political leaders like Indira Gandhi, etc. She also painted India's famous romantic heroes like Omar Khayyam and Soni Mahiwal.

These days, she has little time to paint on her own, of her choice. She is kept fully occupied by the specific demands of her customers, who range from Indian institutions in Britain like the Bharati Vidya Bhawan to private individuals who know about her and request her to paint something specific for a good price. While I was interviewing her, she was painting the famous *Gitā Updeś* of Lord Krishna advocating the message of the

Geeta to Arjun on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. She was doing this painting on a canvas of 6ft x 8ft and was to be paid £1000 for it by a rich Gujarati Hindu family living in Wimbledon (who were involved in a business of exporting garments and crafts from India and Africa).

Another interesting difference was also noted in the family members' perceptions of a woman's retirement. Most women who had come from India and had to work in London due to economic necessity, on reaching this age, appeared happy to sit back at home, their decision usually seconded by the rest of the family. In most cases, when a son started earning, he usually wanted his mother to leave her job or at least take up an easy one, possibly at home.

However in cases where the women had come from Africa and had worked there too, their families and sons would think little of their working, having been used to seeing this. Some women saw this as an additional reason to retire because they had worked almost their entire lives and so felt tired.

For the women who did private work at home, there was no sense of retirement. Many regretted this, yet, on the other hand, they did not have to face the anxieties noted above. The question as to whether that was good or bad evoked non-committal (*kah nahīṁ saktī*) and unsure (*patāh nahīṁ*) responses from them.

In the light of this it can be seen that these attitudes to retirement affected their ageing process as well, and vice-versa. For example, where a woman perceived retirement as a happy state, she was also found to be happy in her ageing years, finding retirement as a time to relax and do other things. By contrast if a woman had economic anxieties at retirement, the anxiety usually translated into feelings of insecurity in her ageing years.

Thus economic independence, whether or not it directly or indirectly affected a woman's position in her house, was considered important in determining her status and security in her ageing years. This also agrees with Itzin's (1990) research with agroup of North London women which "confirms the importance of employment in a desired occupation to the maintenance of a positive identity, and lends support to the view that low self-esteem in later life is realted to the completeness of socialization into femininity" (Arber and Ginn,1991:47) or in other words, though most women worked

for money, their ability to work and earn provided them a sense of self-esteem in old age.

Studies by Vatuk (1990) on Delhi elderly people, and by Goldstein (1983) on the elderly in Nepal, point out the importance of physical and economic independence in securing attention and respect in their ageing years. Vatuk notes the concern of elderly Indian women to die while their "hands and feet are still working" (1990b:67). She further writes that they "clearly anticipated that without such independence it was possible, and even likely, that the younger generation would begin to feel their presence a burden, no longer show them respect, and perhaps even neglect or mistreat them" (1990b:68-69).

Though Vatuk does not make this evident, elderly Indian women want their "hands and feet working" not only because they do not want to be a physical burden on their children, but also because they will be able to contribute to services in the house by sharing labour with their daughters-in-law, e.g, going out to shop, picking up the grandchildren from school or bus stops, cutting vegetables for the meal, making snacks, etc. This indirectly makes them economically viable and reduces the economic burden on their children's family.

Of course it greatly helps if they have economic assets, like property, gold, jewellery or cash, to pass on to their children after their death. Where this is the case their physical incapacitation does not have as great an effect on the care and service they receive from their children. Goldstein (1983) has observed this phenomenon in Nepal. Vatuk quotes him saying,

> ...only those elderly who have their own financial resources either to contribute to running their joint household or to use as leverage [by promising a future inheritance] can expect good treatment in old age (Goldstein,1983 Quoted in Vatuk,1990:79).

While these factors hold true for the elderly immigrant women in London, they did not play a determining role in affecting their economic and physical security in their ageing years. This was primarily because the elderly women in London who received pensions did not have to be economically dependent on their children. Usually their pensions and social welfare benefits (for women who had not been working), medical benefits or mobility allowance, etc. also enabled them to live separately if they so desired, or were forced to by their family. Thus, effectively, they were physically and economically self-sufficient. It was their emotional dependency which was a cause of concern for them,

as it was also exacerbated by the fact that they had limited family, relatives and friends in London to rely upon.

Having discussed at some length the issues facing Gujarati women in relation to their employment status and its effect on their ageing process, a similar analysis follows of those relating to Sikh women.

SECTION II

3.2. SIKH WOMEN: EMPLOYMENT AND AGEING

3.2a. Introduction

This section discusses the nature and experiences of work of Sikh women who migrated to London during 1970-1990.

As in the previous section , I will also assess the importance of various other factors, such as educational background, previous experience of working, knowledge of English language, etc. in influencing Sikh women's decisions to work, the nature of their jobs as well as their responses to their retirement, and the combined effects of their employment status on their ageing process.

The reason for separating the discussion of Sikh women and their employment from Gujarati women and their employment is primarily because both Gujarati and Sikh women focused on the differences between their two communities. Although they stressed these, and while it is reasonable to accept that there are differences between the two communities, as well as within each one, it is less easy to find functional support for their strong beliefs, beyond their relevance to some aspects of the private domain, e.g. marriage of children.

This chapter follows the stylistic pattern of the previous chapter to make it easy to compare and contrast the differences between the Gujarati and Sikh women in relation to their employment status and experiences.

3.2b. Sikh women in Southall

Like the Ealing Road in Wembley where 90% of shops are owned by Gujaratis, 90% of the shops on the Broadway (High Street) in Southall are owned by Sikhs and the rest by other Indians - only one or two are English owned shops. While a fair number of the Sikh population is self-employed i.e has their own business where most of their family members - including women - help out and contribute with their services, a large section of the community is employed in formal sector jobs. According to the 1981 Census, Southall, which is in the Borough of Ealing, 36.63% of married and 73.32% of single, widowed and divorced Indian women [10] were employed (I have reason to believe that most of them were Sikhs, going by the ethnic composition of the Indian population in Southall).

My own study, which is based on a sample of sixty Sikh women, does give an indication of the general trend within the Sikh community.

Before analysing the Tables, it should be pointed out that many Sikh women in India had done what may be called un-paid work i.e they had worked on the family farms with their fathers and brothers. Their work usually went un-paid, for the profit came to everybody jointly in the family, as it happens with many of the women who work in the shops owned by their husbands or family. More often, in London, these women demand to be paid and do get a share of the profit unless the business is failing, in which case nobody gets any real income. I have included the women who had worked on farms as having been employed because, though un-paid, the women themselves saw it as employment.

---

10. This rate has been calculated using the figures in the 1981 Census (Appendices G and H) divided by the percentage of the Indian population in the boroughs.

TABLE 3: Education level and the employment status of Sikh women in India, Africa and London

Education level	No. of Sikh women	Worked in India (p)	Worked in India (up)	Worked in Africa	Worked in London	Continues working after retirement (p)	Continues working after retirement (up)
None	18		8	7	12		3
Primary	10		2	3	5		
VIII	5	1	1	1	4		
X	8		1	2	5		
Matric-ulation	5	1		3	5		
Gradua-tion	6	3		5	6		
Special Courses	8	3		4	8	2	
Total	60	8	12	25	45	2	3
%		13.33	20	41.67	75	3.33	5

p Paid

up Unpaid

TABLE 4: Nature of jobs and the employment status of Sikh women in London

Jobs	Had worked	Continues Working
Factory	7	
Shops (sales assistant)	7	3
Cleaning	6	
Packaging	5	
Departmental Stores (sales - assistant)	5	
Teaching	5	
Post office (attendant)	3	
Secretary/ Clerks	3	
Nurses	2	
Private work	2	2
Total	45	5

Table 3 shows that as stated earlier almost 33.33% of the Sikh women had worked in India. Twenty six percent of those were helping their fathers or brothers on their farms. But there was a 28.3% increase in the employment level of Sikh women on their migration to Africa, which went up again by almost 46.66% on their migration to London. There are two points to note here. Firstly, a good number of Sikh women were working outside their homes, whether paid or unpaid. Secondly, there was a substantial rise in the employment level of the Sikh women with each stage of their migration.

Before analysing the reasons for this, it may be useful to recapitulate briefly what Sikhism says about the role and position of women.

Dhanjal's Sikh respondents told her,

> We are given equal status by the Guru, and gain social equality and religious freedom. Other women can say their prayers at home, but in no other religion do we take over the temple and conduct the service (1976:109).

Bhachu also states that,

> The independence of Sikh women, and their ability to exercise control over their own wages, is linked not only to the predominance of nuclear households with no authoritarian elders and gatekeepers of expenditure, but also to the Sikh religion, which accords equal status to men and women (1988:77).

Thus religion often became a reference point in allowing or not allowing women to work outside their houses, or in justifying or uplifting their position within their households.

3.2c. Views of women in Sikhism

The Sikh Gurus were practical in their outlook towards life. They preached against asceticism and renunciation. They considered it a negative and defeatist outlook to run away from the world. They were of the opinion that *grahastha* was the best *āśram* (mode of life) as it regulated their lives and *karma* (action) in the right direction. They were of the conviction that a householder with good action and repetition of God's name could obtain *mukti* (salvation). Woman, who is the pivot of the *grahastha āśram*, has been considered a helping hand to man in the achievement of *mukti*. She has been referred to as one who provides the maximum comforts to man. The Gurus also advocated equality between a son and a daughter. The Sikh Gurus gave due regard and honour to the womenfolk and preached that they were the symbol of domestic harmony and happiness, social cohesion and unity. They took an active part and keen interest in running the *langar* (communal kitchen) which provided practical training in high ideals of equality, love and service, as preached and practised by the Gurus. The wives of the Sikh Gurus took an active part in the running of and serving in the common kitchen, thus setting examples of service for other women of the society (Singh,1979:118-125; Johar,1988:119-135).

3.2d. Sikh women going out of the house to work

Kulbir stated:

> In my time girls were not very educated, not because we were not allowed to go out of the house but because we had to learn domestic things and help out at home. My brothers were also not very educated. Two of them studied up to class V and then they started working with my father on the farm. Though I was a girl, I used to help them on the farm as well. At the time of harvesting, even mother used to work on the farm with us. Most of the girls in our village used to work on their farms. Of-course the tougher work was done by the men. Girls from big [richer] families used to help out much less or not at all on their farms because they had lots of servants or poor villagers to help out on their farms....Anyway, it was nothing new for us Sikh girls to go out of our house and work alongside our men-folk, but yes, all the men used to be from our family or at times from our village. However, there used to be a strong vigil on us girls and that is why we were married off quite early....Anyway, doing work was my habit and so when I came to Africa or came to London, I did not find it difficult to work nor was I stopped from doing work. Actually it was my husband who had first suggested that I work though I myself had been thinking about it on seeing so many of the women from my community working in Africa. But then, I had to face other kinds of problem like I did not know English and I had never worked with strangers, but then when my husband did not object I decided to go ahead and work, though naturally at first I was shy and unconfident. But then I was not completely new to going out of the house and working and I remembered how I worked at home on the farm which gave me the initial courage to go out and work. After I started working I got used to it. In fact I picked up Swahili very fast and also picked up some English, that is why, though I started work in a factory in Africa, on coming to London I got a job in a Departmental Store.

Thus, while Kulbir, like many of her Gujarati counterparts, began by stating that girls in her village were not allowed to go in for education, she also reveals the experiences which distinguish most Sikh women from most Gujarati women. Kulbir, as well as many of the other Sikh women (though their cases are not quoted here) stated that they were allowed to go out of their homes and work on their family farms. In fact they were expected to or told to work there. When asked whether they would have been allowed to work if they did not have a farm, most women said they do not know because they were not educated and so they would not have been able to find work anywhere else.

However, Kulbir's case should not be taken as typical of all the Sikh women in London. Often one found differences in the Sikh community based on caste. The two most prominent caste distinctions in the Sikh community is that between the Jats and the

Ramgardiahs. While the Jats are considered a higher caste, their traditional occupation was farming and they were also usually the land owners; the Ramgardiahs are considered a lower caste, their traditional occupation was crafts (carpenters and blacksmiths) and business.

Jatinder's explanation of her life and job opportunities was typical of many Ramgardiah women. Jatinder's views on the general situation of Ramgardiah women, who like her had migrated to Africa and then to London seeking employment in both places, are relevant here.

Jatinder was educated up to Matriculation level and had worked as a nurse in Africa and in London, but was now retired. Speaking generally for Ramgardiah women, she explained:

> Because we Ramgardiahs have money and we believe that both girls and boys are equal we give our sons and daughters equal education and also because we have good money we allow our children to study as much as they want; that's why many Ramgardiahs are very well-educated. But because the Ramgardiahs are also very religious and traditional people, we get our daughters married very early, which in a way prevents them from getting jobs....And also because we Ramgardiahs do not generally have farms, our girls cannot really help out on the farms. Otherwise our family people and men generally have this excuse that they are well off so they do not need to send their wives out of the house to work and live on their earnings....It was because most Ramgardiahs are educated and because they are also in trade that a lot of Ramgardiahs went to Africa and settled there....And when some women started working, more Ramgardiah women stepped out of their houses to work. When I reached Africa six years after my marriage because my husband was working in Kenya and had now got a permanent job and wanted to settle there, I saw that a number of Ramgardiah women in my neighbourhood were working and that inspired me to ask my husband if I too could work. My husband gave me instant permission, which I wouldn't have got in Punjab, because my in-laws would have objected. A lot of other Ramgardiah women who wanted to work could not do so only because their in-laws were with them. Anyway, in my case I had qualifications up to Matric and in my neighbourhood there was a woman who was a nurse in a hospital and it was with her help that I found a job as a nurse but in a different hospital. In London too I got the job as a nurse because I had 15 years' experience in the profession in Kenya and I really liked this work.

Thus, for Jatinder, things were rather strict at home because she belongs to the Ramgardiah caste which, although it has more traditional and orthodox views on the role and position of women, and despite the fact that it is a wealthy group which allows

its women to go for education does not encourage them to work. As Jatinder points out, the men in her caste group justify their orthodoxy in keeping women indoors by saying that they don't need money so their women do not need to go out and work. Yet, despite this, the pressure of migration and opportunities for jobs and good money, as well as the absence of the pressure of in-laws (who abide more strictly by tradition), Ramgardiah women were allowed to go out of home and seek employment in Africa and London.

While the Ramgardiah women of my study were broadly similar to the Ramgardiah women of Bhachu's study (1984) in that the latter too came across as traditional and orthodox compared to Jat Sikh women, I found the Ramgardiah women also very opportunistic and progressive, primarily owing to their migratory position. So how are the Ramgardiah women actually placed in terms of their jobs, compared to the Jat Sikh women in London?

Though both Jat and Ramgardiah women stressed the difference in life-style between the two castes, the differences in terms of education and employment structure or the nature of jobs were not as marked as they suggested. The difference was more in their perceptions of the different ritual and economic status of the opposing caste groups. It was this that often caused the tension between Jat and Ramgardiah Sikh women who lived and worked in the same neighbourhood.

Surender, a Jat woman, said to me,

> You know why I hated my job? It's not because I had a problem with working, it was because I am from an upper caste and what work did I do? I used to seal boxes in a juice factory because I was not very educated, only up to V standard and could not speak English. Another woman who used to stay two houses away from mine, worked in the same factory and was our head in-charge. She was a Ramgardiah, a caste below ours. But because she had gone to Africa and could speak a fair amount of English, she had become our in-charge. This I could not tolerate, but then what to do, one had to work, one needed money, so in this country one had to tolerate even this.

But when I spoke to Sheela, who was the Ramgardiah Sikh in-charge of Surender at the factory, Sheela had a different view.

> I know Surender didn't like me and resented my position of superiority at work, because as you know she is a Jat woman, from a higher caste

> and I am from a lower caste, yet I was earning better than her. But then this was only at work and she felt threatened by just one person, me. But what about my situation? I lived two doors away from her, which was a predominantly Jat neighbourhood and do you know how I was treated there? Many Jat women were doing even lower or similar jobs to Surender and they all treated me with the same disrespect as our caste would perhaps be treated in India, in Punjab. Very few Jat women in the neighbourhood spoke to me even out of courtesy. Most Jat women openly sneered at me and passed derogatory comments about my caste. Do you know how I felt then, or about how I was made to feel guilty if I entered the Havelock Road Gurdwara just because it's predominantly visited by the Jat women from around the area? I felt like a social out-caste. I would have moved out of there earlier but then that house was walking distance from my work place, my husband's work place and my children's school. We would have lost so much in time and money if we had moved out of there, so we had little choice and we put up with it. If I gained economically, I lost a lot socially, all because of our caste system which Sikhism denounces anyway.

Surender's and Sheela's case, once again, points out the conflict between the world of ideal and the world of reality or in other words, between expectation and experience. Ideally, Jats occupy a better ritual and social status compared to the Ramgardiahs in India, and therefore they are expected to be in a better socio-economic position than Ramgardiahs in London, but in reality, owing to the Ramgardiahs' careful use of migration opportunities, many have found prosperity.

Jat women have to contend with their comparatively poorer status in London and lack of sophistication compared to Ramgardiah women whom they feel have an unfair edge over them. For Ramgardiah women it is problematic to be deferential to Jat women who, though less qualified and poorer, attempt to command greater social respect because of their higher caste status. These differences often led to sterotypical bias against each other. I very often heard statements such as "the Jat woman is a sloppy dresser", and "the carpenters decorate their wives". East African Ramgardiahs see the Jat women coming from India as "dirty peasants" and the Jat women see the East Africans as "flashy and uneducated". I found that while Ramgardiahs were not seen as uneducated, they were referred to as "show-offs" (*dikhāvatī*), because of their boasts about their knowledge of English, and the wealth they had accumulated in Africa.

However a number of Ramgardiah women complained of having to put up with various aspects of traditionalism in the family for the sake of their caste unity. This is contrary to what Bharati found in his study of Ramgardiahs in Africa about whom he says "emancipated Ramgardiahs do not want to be identified with the Ramgardiahs by

outsiders" (1967:314). I actually witnessed great caste solidarity among the Ramgardiahs compared to the Jats who would often prefer regional identification as African Indians (if they came from Africa) to their caste status since this latter often connoted a poor rural identity.

Balbir, a Ramgardiah woman said:

> Jat women are behind us in all aspects and so it's nothing big if one is just higher in caste. They have only this. We are ahead of them in all things, in studies, better off in terms of money, and they know all this and are jealous of us. That is the reason that they threaten us but we must not become weak (*kamzor*). We must not think of ourselves as small. We are proud of our caste. Today, we have done so well, so at least I am very proud of my caste. As it is we are here in this country only because of our having done well and we want to do better, so what is the good of seeing the high or the low status of castes? We know that we are doing well and Jat women are simply jealous of us.

Thus, Balbir was able to negate her caste's lower ritual status by its (generally) higher achievement record in terms of education and money compared to the Jats.

However there is another dimension to these perceptions. While caste differences appear real, in the same context the regional distinctions within a caste group may hold more importance, e.g. an educated, successful, urbanized Jat woman is seen to command more respect within her Jat group, and generally restricts herself from mixing with the less urbanized/rural, less educated and less well-off Jat women.

These differences were succintly explained to me by Karanjeet, a Jat woman who retired as a teacher from a primary school in Southall.

> I am a Jat myself but I have to say this for the women of my community. Most of the Jat women who come here to London are not educated but they have found work and have supported their families in London. We must give them credit for that. But then, few of them have really grown in that sense. Even after working for twenty to thirty years of their life here, they can hardly speak a sentence of English or know much about what's happening in the world. They live primarily in the Asian, or even Sikh or Jat community where possible...they interact with their own narrow groups, so they have not grown much or at all even in twenty or thirty years of their life in Africa or London. And I certainly can't interact with such women. They are my community so I cannot disown them and I regard them in many other ways but I cannot have a good relationship with any of them unless they are educated and have a broad

> outlook on life...an educated Ramgardiah woman is worse. She is educated but orthodox, being brought up in that tradition and finding it difficult to break from that because she has to live in her community. So either way I cannot interact much with the Jat or Ramgardiah women.

But had the Jat and Ramgardiah women who had worked in India, Africa or London, developed only as Karanjeet suggested, or had they met challenges and grown in a way that Karanjeet could not see? Maybe the experiences of some of the Sikh women at work will suggest an answer. Expectations of Sikh women, which were based on Sikh tradition, were in practice undercut by the socio-economic background of the women and the relative conservatism and opportunism of the caste group they belonged to.

3.2e. Experience at work

Dilpreet, a Jat woman who had just retired from work had the following to say about her experiences at her job. She said:

> When I came here from Africa, I did find a job in a garment factory here but then the kind of struggle I faced everyday in reaching work - first taking a bus, then a train and then again a bus - was very tiring and very expensive. Still, one can put up with that if at least one's work is good. But in the factories here we Asian women are treated worse than machines. White people know our need for money and then we are in <u>their</u> country and they have <u>ruled</u> over us, so they have a similar attitude at work, that is, they make us work very hard for very little money. If I did not have the support of other Asian women at work I wouldn't have survived in that job. We used to listen to each others' problems and partake in each one's sadness or joy. If somebody got married or had a child or had a festival in their community, we used to celebrate that and try to forget the tediousness and injustices at work. That is the way many Asian women passed our time at work and tolerated the injustices.

Thus, Dilpreet was able to cope with the problems of work because she could identify with the group of Asian women working with her in the factory, and partake in their mutual joys, sorrows, comfort and celebrations.

Shailja, another Jat woman, worked at a factory (cosmetics) and she too had a group of Asian co-workers as friends. They also celebrated events of joy, and comforted each other in times of sorrow or distress. However Shailja decided to fight against the exploitation at work.

Shailja's tie with the Southall Monitoring Group - where I met her - goes back some

fifteen years when she came to London from Birmingham and went to work for a cosmetics factory. Faced with exploitation she decided to take the issue into her own hands, and approached the organization for help in contacting a Trade Union as there was none at the factory in which she was working. In Shailja's own words,

> I had worked in a much bigger factory than the one in London and there could never have been this kind of exploitation because in that factory each women had protection through the workers' union. And here there was no union so exploitation was inevitable. Before this I had never been directly involved with any of the union's activities but I was familiar with some of their working. That is why I approached this organization because I was new in London and therefore did not know a lot about various trade union groups for women employees here. However, with the help of the workers in this organization, I contacted the union activists of a very big cosmetics factory in London. After that there was no looking back. We openly challenged all the injustices at work and demanded to put a stop to all forms of exploitation. Our owners did try and threaten us initially but then I knew legal answers to all their threats and so they had to finally accept all our demands. We also then formed a union at our factory. Naturally I had to become the President because other women were not yet experienced in all this, however all the women gave me their full co-operation. In that factory we had five English women workers, two Chinese and eight Indian and Pakistani women and always everyone gave their support as one. Many of our Asian women are scared to fight for their rights, but why? They are working hard and are only asking to be paid justly for their work. What if we are in a foreign land. We are not eating free meals. We are working very hard for our daily bread. We want our rights and we are not asking for anything more. Even after retirement I look after a lot of work of the union at the factory and many women come to me for advice. I like working for the betterment of women, be they Asian or any other nationality.

Both the above cases (Dilpreet's and Shailja's) partly illustrates what Westwood found in her study of Gujarati factory workers who "are fast learning...to fight for their cause with their unions [but]...nonetheless celebrate occasions of womanhood like marriage and motherhood" (1988:120). There is thus not much difference in this respect, for a Gujarati or a Sikh factory worker. Nor has much changed if the experiences of women employees of a generation ago are compared with the second generation women of Westwood's study.

Yet, what was remarkable with the women of the first generation who had worked and stood up against exploitation and demanded their rights was that many of these women had been exposed to work for the first time in a western country. Many lacked knowledge of English and were not very familiar with the laws of the land, yet had made

efforts to stand against exploitation the moment they found sympathetic or legal support.

We may also note a subtle difference between the Gujarati and Sikh women who asserted their rights at their work places. While most Gujarati women, before taking any action, sought their husband's permission to stand up against injustice, Sikh women needed no such support or sanction as long as they had recourse to a helpful legal system.

This also suggests that men (particularly Sikh) were gradually losing their control and influence over their wives in the work arena. In addition, Sikh women who were working were learning to keep their domestic world separate from their world at work. This was a subtle way of asserting their freedom from traditional roles and expectations when they were outside the house. Thus a Sikh woman was learning relatively fast to enlarge boundaries and better the status associated with her femininity.

My findings thus parallel those of Bhachu (1988) who argued that Sikh women were able to assert their rights at work and eventually at home on the basis of their new-found status as wage-earners.

However, Bhachu's sample ignores caste differences between Jats and Ramgardiahs and I have shown this to be crucial for the understanding of differences within the Sikh community. Women's perceptions of their roles, and others' expectations of them, are often guided by their caste's ritual and economic position and also by their castes' relative conservatism or liberalism.

Further, Bhachu's sample does not include senior women in Sikh households (1988:82). While there were fewer Sikh housholds with senior women than Gujarati houses in my sample it would be missing an important aspect of the reality if a sample excludes them. Seniors (in-laws) often played a crucial role in controlling the wages of children, including those of daughters-in-law, in the house.

Today most children control their own earnings, but this is the result of recent changes.

3.2f. Women doing private work at home

As Table 4 shows, there were only two women who did private work at home and I was told that only very few Sikh women took up such work. The reasons pointed out for this were: Firstly, most Sikh men and families (even with in-laws) allowed their wives and womenfolk to go out and work. Secondly, women themselves preferred to go out and work so that they had an opportunity to socialise with other women at work. Thirdly, one was paid very poorly if one took up private work at home. Fourthly, not all women had skills to take up private work at home. And fifthly, most Sikh women (particularly coming from Africa) had been exposed to working outside the house as jobs were easy to find and paid well in Africa.

Why did the two Sikh women in my sample work at home? One of the two women does stitching for a private English company, and the other woman makes pickles and relishes for a famous Asian food brand.

Paramjeet, who is a Ramgardiah woman, said that she had taken up private stitching at home because,

> When we came from Uganda, we had lost almost everything there and so we had to start from scratch here. All my three children were very young then and we did not have any relation here to help us at that point. We desperately needed more money because my husband's pay was very little for all us. Because the children were so small I decided that I should find a job with which I could earn but also stay at home to take care of my childern as we could not afford to pay for a baby-sitter. My husband was very happy with my decision. And so because I was good at stitching I decided to do it professionally. I sought my neighbour's sister-in-law's help who also used to do the same because she too had very small children and like us could not afford a baby sitter. But though I started this job because I had no other alternative, I started liking it in the sense that it gave me a lot of freedom of movement, and flexibility with time. So I still continue with the job at this age [66 years old] though, of course, I take fewer orders than I used to.

Anita, the other woman who does private work at home, is a Jat. She makes pickles and relishes, and found her job through an acquaintance she made while eating in the *langar* (communal meal) at the Havelock Road Gurdwara. Anita said:

> That day there was pickle with the food and it tasted awful, so I said that to a lady standing and eating next to me and she said `well if you do it for so many people you can't expect it to be good'. I found that a stupid

> logic and told her so, at which she got quite annoyed and told me to prove otherwise. I too felt very bad that day but decided to take up the challenge. I knew this Pakistani lady in our neighbourhood who used to make some food at home for a Company so I approached her to see if I could do some pickles and relishes for the same company and it worked....No, my husband did not mind. I just told him and he agreed - what man can resist the idea of good money coming into the family. And he couldn't really stop me from working because so many of our Ramgardiah women work in this country and then I was only working at home so what objection could he have? Anyway, now I have done this job for the last thirty years and my orders have only been going up. So I have, well, won the challenge and that woman who had challenged me is actually my very good friend now, because I am what I am today only because of her challenge....I really enjoy my work. I do not mind working at home because working at home gives me the opportunity of using the time as I wish...and I don't miss socialization because I go out of the house very often, to buy things for my pickles and relishes and can go and meet friends and relatives because I am not working regular hours every day. This way I feel I am in control to just accept orders most of the time over the phone, and deliver goods on time [a van comes and picks it up] and so I don't even get to meet my employer.

Though Paramjeet is a Ramgardiah and Anita a Jat, in both cases the decision to work was taken by the two women themselves and they had informed the husbands later. The informants were not clear as to whether this was because they knew that their husbands were not likely to object since they were going to work at home and so could well keep within the traditional bounds of their caste or culture. Another significant point in Paramjeet's and Anita's cases is their use of friends and acquaintances in finding jobs. But how did most other Sikh women find jobs?

Once again, like the Gujarati women, Sikh women found their jobs through friends or acquaintances in the neighbourhood, or distant relations rather than their husbands or close family members. Very few women mentioned any member in their immediate family directly helping them to find jobs.

As in the case of Gujarati husbands, Sikh men also considered their duties fulfilled by just advising their wives to ask so and so, or to go and find out about the jobs at various places, but they hardly ever accompanied them in this task, nor to the interviews, even where the places were unknown or distant for the women. Usually they would be accompanied by a friend from the community or a relative, only women generally, but in some cases young nephews or a friend's son if he happened to be working in the same area, or knew more about the job involved.

Having managed to find jobs on their own, and working out its problems by themselves, these women had turned out to be fairly strong and seemed to have developed in many ways from the time they had left their homes in Punjab.

Their ideas of their own roles as women was being enlarged to incorporate their roles in the outside world too. This in turn was affecting the perceptions of their role and position in the domestic world, particularly vis-a-vis their husbands. This can be seen more clearly in the following accounts.

3.2g. Changes in the status of women due to work

Almost 50% (35% of whom were Jats and 15% Ramgardiahs) of the women who had worked outside their houses said that there were changes in their status within the family due to working, but the other 25% said that there were very few changes in their status within the family as a result of their working and earning status.

First, the women who said that there were changes in their status as a result of going out to work and earning money gave reasons like Kunali, a Ramgardiah woman:

> I had started working in Africa itself because my husband had asked me to, which was a good thing because that way my husband's family who were in India could not say anything to me about my going out to work. And then because I was earning as much as my husband, my position was even better in the family....I used to give my entire salary to my husband and he used to put it in his account and from that he used to give me money to run the house and for my daily expenses in commuting to work. That is how I spent my four years in Africa. But then I did not begrudge him because my husband used to help a lot with house work. Both of us were working, and if we needed time to ourselves my husband was forced to help me to finish the house work quickly, and also because he had asked me to work he felt obliged to help. But when we came to London, we used to get much lower salaries and everything was so expensive here. Suddenly my husband started becoming very miserly with money. His whole attitude to work changed, he would work overtime and asked me to take overtime work as well and because he was doing overtime very frequently he also stopped helping me at home. We would fight quite regularly about this and also about him wanting to keep a check on each and every penny I spent and telling me off if I had spent more on something. One day I decided that I had had enough and so I confronted him and said that I would like to have a separate account from which I will spend for the house and he could pay from his salary for the bills. And, I told him that if he did not agree to this then I would quit my job. For a whole week I stressed this point everyday to make him realise that I was serious about my threat. At last he agreed and I got my

> separate account which stopped our daily quibbling. My point was that I was working and earning so why should I constantly feel like a beggar [*bhikāran*] asking my husband for any little thing that I wanted. Now I am happy with my pension which again goes into my own account and I am not dependent on anybody, that is what I worked so hard for 35 years of my life.

A very similar situation to Kunali's was reported by Jogi, a Jat woman whose husband when she had started working had controlled her earnings. He put her entire salary into his account (not even a joint account) and would only give Jogi some money to run the house. But she said that what upset her was that,

> From the day we came to London and when we saw the expenses of everything here, my husband started saying that I must walk [45 minutes] to the big Departmental store and that he would not come with me but that I can take my daughter with me to help with the shopping. I don't know how he expected me to do that after I was working for six days a week and had so much house work to do on the one day off that I used to get. So it was this unreasonable demand of his that got me finally one day. Actually that day I had come back from work and as the milk had finished I went to the corner shop to buy some milk. My husband saw this and on my coming home he scolded me so badly and would have hit me as well if I had not saved myself. I told him I had had enough from him and that from now on I wanted a separate account and also that I shall not do anymore shopping for the family, instead I will give him money to go and shop for the week or if anything finishes in the house unexpectedly. It was too much for my husband and he threatened to turn me out of the house, but instead I walked out on him and told him that I shall come back only if he agrees to all that I wanted. My mother-in-law used to stay with us, she was a sick and dependent widow. She watched all this quietly and said nothing to her son or made no attempt to stop me even though she knew that it would be difficult for her to manage as I used to do most of her things. Anyway I went to my friend's place and stayed there for a week. My friend supported me because she had gone through a very similar experience herself, although her fight was more against her in-laws. Anyway I knew sooner or later my husband would realise how indispensable I was for the family, and so he did in a week's time and I went back, having got my way finally with things. From that day my husband was a changed man because now I was living on my terms and he kept feeling obliged and I think also slightly threatened by me. But how do you think I could do this - it was only because I had a job and no anxiety of being on the roads without money that I could demand my rights, my *izzat* (honour) as an equal human being and not allow myself to be treated as a servant (*naukrāni*) by my husband and to some extent my mother-in-law.

These quotes support Bhachu's claim that

> Women's control over cash has not necessarily led to the reversal of roles

> but to a recognition by women that they have a right to assert their opinion about household management and to negotiate a more favourable position for themselves vis-a-vis their menfolk(1988:92).

and Dhanjal's observation,

> For a woman to have an economic stake in the family is a new situation. Nowadays, some wives and mothers, on the basis of the pay-packet, do dare to claim `equality' with their husbands (1976:111).

There were also, of course, a section of women who were not working and therefore did not have the security of an independent income to negotiate a better position for themselves in the household.

In addition, 25% of the women in my sample who were working said that they did not experience much change as a result of their new independent income. According to Manjeet, a Ramgardiah woman, the reason why her status did not change at home in spite of her income was because, as she said,

> My in-laws used to stay with us and I had started working only with their permission so I had to give them my entire salary. My husband used to give his salary to them too. This was our family custom. But when we came to London, my husband took charge because my in-laws could not speak English and found it difficult managing everything here. So I started giving my salary to my husband too. We were seven of us in the family, both my in-laws, my husband and myself and our three children. All our income was consumed by daily expenses. I was always under great stress. I used to work six days a week and also do over-time. There was no over-time on my husband's job. So, I was over-worked because I used to manage most of the house work too since my mother-in-law was ill and refused to even help a bit. My friends at work suggested that I protest at home against being over-worked like this etc. but I could not do it because I cared a lot for my children and couldn't afford to live without them and so I tolerated it. My husband knew my weakness and that is why he could get away whenever I asked for help. But then, as I said, because of my weakness I continued being exploited by my own family, working hard everyday and not even getting to see my money the day after I handed the salary to my husband....I had no sense of freedom or independence because I was emotionally dependent and I had to pay a price for that.

Thus women like Manjeet did not find much change in their status despite working because firstly, they lived in joint families and their earnings which they gave to their husbands or in-laws were all used for the family, and so they were unable to spend any of it on themselves. Secondly, though they knew that they could live independently on

their own, they did not want to do that because it was not the reason for their working, and also because they cared for their children (more than for themselves), so would not ever leave them. In a number of cases women said that their husbands knew about their emotional dependency and therefore took advantage of that, making them do more than their fair share of work and refusing to help much at home themselves. Therefore some women paid the price of personal emotional weakness with their independence.

Almost the same number of Ramgardiah as Jat women explained the lack of a status change within their husbands' family through their in-laws control of their income. Although this is difficult to explain, it was more Ramgardiah women than Jat women who confessed to emotional dependency or weakness and concern for children and husband, as reasons for not being able to assert rights to a part of their earnings for themselves. Perhaps it relates to the different socialization of girls in the Ramgardiah households, although my research did not extend to this area.

3.2h. Retirement

A number of Sikh informants - both Jats and Ramgardiahs (like their Gujarati counterparts) - mocked the word retirement saying, "retired, we haven't retired yet" or "we will never retire" or "we shall retire only the day we die". The women were trying to say that they understood retirement as relief from work by relaxing or doing what they wanted to do. This introduces the concept of "leisure" (*arām*) which for most women translated as "free-time" (*khālī-samay*). Women made a distinction between leisure and free-time. They explained that while men on retirement can indulge in leisure activities throughout the day like watching television, doing gardening, playing bridge, or gossiping with friends, they did not get much free-time to indulge in any leisure activities of their choice.

So most of these women did not see themselves as having become free from work upon their official retirement. Perhaps, because most of these women had worked only to support their families, they had seen their outside work as an extension of their work in the family or for the family, and thus could not or did not directly respond to the official usage of the word retirement.

While most Gujarati women had mentioned experiencing a sense of relief on retirement,

the most common feeling among the Sikh women (more Jats than Ramgardiahs) was a sense of regret. Even though most women had worked because of a sense of duty to support their families economically, they had enjoyed working, though not necessarily the work itself. They liked being able to get out of the house and temporarily forget about the problems at home, make friends at work, socialise with work mates, learn about life outside their homes and community and enjoy (to an extent) the sense of independence which their earnings gave them. So they missed all this, and regretted or felt bad (*burā lagnā si*) about having retired.

The Sikh women came across as more social and gregarious compared to their Gujarati counterparts. Despite the fact that Jat women were generally of lower economic status than Ramgardiahs they were more likely to see their job as an opportunity to socialize while they earned. Ramgardiahs rarely cited socializing as an important criterion for working or continuing to work.

The second more powerful response, this time equally among Jat and Ramgardiah women, was the feeling of loneliness (*akelāpan*) and of being trapped or suffocated (*ghuṭan*). These women had not made any other friends besides their work-mates, because, while working, they had little time to socialise with others between work and their family life. Now after retirement, it was difficult to keep in touch with friends from work because their friends lived far away and it was expensive to visit them with just their pension money for support. Thus not only did they regret having to retire but felt suddenly lonely and trapped at home. So some of the women had made efforts to come to the gurdwara on a fairly regular basis, or to come to Milap - day centre for the elderly.

Six women, out of whom five were Jats, mentioned that retirement involved financial difficulty. This does not necessarily mean that Jat women were more money-minded than Ramgardiah women (as the relevant cases have shown) but that more Jat women came from poorer backgrounds and needed money more than most Ramgardiah women. In two of the cases (a Jat and a Ramgardiah) it was because the whole family had got used to the extra money, which was no longer available, that they had now to watch all their expenditure very carefully. Four (all Jats) out of six women were in greater difficulty because they had incurred debts for their children's weddings which were still not fully repaid. They wished they had additional income for a few more years to pay off the debt.

However, most of the women found their pension money fairly sufficient for them. In fact, Daljeet, a widow said:

> Now that I am retired and all my children are married, I no longer have a family to run and so I can enjoy my pension only for myself...as I told you, my earnings when I was working were always used up entirely for the family because my husband's salary was low and and all our savings had been used up in our children's weddings and so, with no responsibility now, I can at least enjoy my pension money...as it is, it's only what I have already worked for.

For some, retirement did bring feelings of happiness (*kẖushī*) and contentment (*saṅtoṣ*). Four (two Ramgardiahs and two Sikhs) out of 45 retired women said that they were happy (*kẖush*) during retirement. Now that all their responsibilities were over (children married and settled with families) they had extra time to be able to do what they wanted. And so, unlike some of the women who visited the gurdwara because they missed the socializing at work, these women spent a lot of their time in the gurdwara because they had missed being able to do that previously and now felt happy that they could. Also, as one of them said, "I have a lot to thank *Guru* for...it's because of his grace that all my children are well settled now and my husband and I are both free after having done all our duties. Well, so now I want to serve our *Guru*".

Once again, like the Gujarati women, the effect of retirement on the ageing process of Sikh women depended on their perceptions of retirement, i.e happy or sad or anxious. This likewise affected their ageing process, and in so far as attitudes to retirement did not depend on caste distinctions, this distinction was not very relevant in helping them adjust to the ageing process.

3.2i. Women continuing to work after retirement, or after reaching the official retirement age

There were five women in the sample who continued working after the official age of retirement. Two of these women (a Jat and a Ramgardiah) were, however, the ones who had been doing private work at home and therefore official retirement meant little or nothing to them. They both said that they will continue to work while their faculties are intact, because though they did not need money now, they had got used to working, and enjoyed it more, for now there was even less or no economic pressure at all.

The other three women (all Jats) who were working were actually doing un-paid work because they were helping out in their sons' or relatives' shops. Two of them said that they got bored sitting at home and missed socializing at work, and one of them said that her son actually needed an extra hand at the shop. As she was not physically incapable, and could speak some English, she volunteered to help and now she enjoys doing this because previously all her life she had worked in the packaging industry and therefore saw this job as upward social mobility for herself as the mother of the owner of the shop. Thus some women continued to work after retirement for other than economic reasons. Some worked only to keep themselves busy, or to socialize, or contribute voluntarily, or just because they enjoyed the work, which they hoped to do until they were rendered physically incapable or died.

3.3. SUMMARY

We have noted that Gujaratis are divided on religious lines between Hindus and Ismailis, while Sikhs are divided on caste lines between Jats and Ramgardiahs. The ritual differences in both communities are further accentuated by differences of educational levels, previous experiences of work, economic backgrounds, exposure to urban life in Africa, relative wealth and knowledge of English.

However, while choice had very little to do with belonging to a certain caste group, individual responses to the situation at work were a matter of personal conviction. In many cases, Ramgardiah and Jat women often had similar responses to their experiences at work, or to their retirement, and to their ageing process, i.e responses were based more on "contextual similarity" than normative differences between or within the community. This gives credence to Spencer's distinction between life-course, a cognitive timetable of expectations, and life-text, a notional ordering of events and broad trends in the life course that acquires meaning in the way it is interpreted by each individual (1990:19-20).

The same argument holds true in comparing the Gujarati and Sikh women in relation to their employment and ageing. The differences between Gujarati and Sikh women were related more to their socio-economic backgrounds, e.g, many Sikh women belonged to farming communities which allowed them to work on family farms along with men

from the family, giving them double exposure to work (going out to work and working equally along with men from a very young age). This was responsible for a greater confidence in their gender and their ability to work. However, not all Sikh women came from farming backgrounds. Most Ramgardiah Sikh women came from business backgrounds, as did most Gujarati women, so there were variations.

While in some cases these differences are functional and a woman's situation and responses can be explained through them, in other cases these differences are mitigated by situational similarities which foster equivalent responses from both Gujarati and Sikh women, e.g women learning from their work experience to stand up and demand their rights at work as well as at home.

However, while minimising the differences occasioned by religious background, it must be said that more Sikh women emerged as relatively assertive, demanding and gregarious compared to Gujarati women, many of whom seemed relatively submissive, home-focused and lonely. Perhaps the difference can partly be attributed to the respective socialization philosophies of their religions.

This chapter has traced the beginnings of conflict in the lives of Indian women between their expectations (and, expectations of them) and their experiences when they step out of their domestic confines to work and so share in the support of their family along with their husbands. In many cases, the women were not educated or skilled, and lacked knowledge of English. Though they were allowed to, or in some cases forced to, break traditions which confined them to the house, the traditional authority structure of their domestic world was extended to the outside world too. Many had to seek permission from their husbands and in-laws where present, to work. The authority of husbands and in-laws was noted to be without reciprocal responsibility: for women were often left alone to find a job and face struggles at work.

Furthermore, women's contribution in the world of work did not change their traditional role in the domestic domain. They still had to do all the household work and care for the children. Even in their ageing years, even where they were not as active or suffered minor illnesses, they were expected to continue working till their responsibility towards their family had been discharged and all their children were married.

Yet in spite of all the difficulties and the continuous conflict about what was expected of them, they faced the challenges thrown up by the realities of life in this country where they were not supported and had little choice. They acquired a sense of achievement particularly compared to women who had not been able to work or who had to do private work at home, because their status as wage-earners helped them achieve a sense of independence. Whether women controlled their wages or not, the fact that they earned installed a sense of tacit freedom to feel that they could support themselves if they walked out of their homes, or if a calamity befell them.

Socialization at work and time spent away from their home also produced a sense of freedom. In the case of Sikh women, with problems at work, many decided to tackle these themselves with the support of trade unions. They did not need the support and sanction of their husbands to fight for their rights at work. Thus they were gradually able to draw a line between the domestic and outside worlds, between their expectations and reality. Finally, the occupational pension in old age provided women with a sense of security, freedom and self-respect.

The actual and tacit sense of independence felt by women (primarily by the Sikhs) was also asserted by some women in their homes vis-a-vis their role and status within the family, particualrly in relation to their husbands. While this was seen as a challenge to the male notion of masculinity, women were extending the boundaries of their traditional notions of femininity.

The same challenge was visible in cases where women were earning more than their husbands and were seen to be usurping men's position as bread winners for the family. Women faced problems and conflicts due to the tension betwen their employment and their family life and relationships which affected their ageing process, but often the end result of the conflict has been more or less positive. This will be analysed in detail in the next chapter.

However the questions left unanswered at the end of this chapter are: is their sense of economic security sufficient in old age? What about their need for emotional security? There are also, of course, women who have worked at home and not felt so free, or who do not have the security of occupational pensions on retirement. There are women who have not been able to work or were not allowed to work. There are women who have

come from India in their ageing years, as dependents on their sons in the U.K. What happens to all these women's sense of security, freedom and self-respect in their advanced years? How do they approach their ageing? These questions will be explored in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

GUJARATI AND SIKH WOMEN: FAMILY, RELATIONSHIPS AND AGEING

4. Introduction

While the previous chapter traced the working experience of Gujarati and Sikh women from 1970s-1990s in London, this chapter looks at the present life of this sample of immigrant Indian women as they grow old or older in London. The focus is on how these women lead their daily lives within their families, or outside it if they are living separately, and what kind of family lives the women have. What are their relationships with close family members? How do their family lives and relationships affect their ageing process?

This chapter highlights the tension between expectations and experience. In the previous chapter we saw the women being subject to this tension as chores and behaviours were expected of them, while they had to face the real world of employment which demanded codes of practice which often contradicted ideal expected roles. In this chapter this matrix is reversed. Now, women are presented as the ones who (also) expect a certain behaviour or attitude from members of their family.

The questions then are: are their expectations based on the real world as they have experienced it themselves or do they show a lack of empathy in this instance? Are the women who came from India in their old age as dependents the ones who have a bigger problem with suddenly having to adjust their expectations to the unfamiliar realities of life in a western country?

The chapter also questions two main premises. Firstly, the role of the Indian family in a western context, and, secondly, the role of elderly people in the Indian family. Most writers studying the two have idealised both. Kent (1971) praised the Indian family for the stability of its structure. Kallarackal and Herbert (1976) talked about the strong and protective nature of Indian families. Many writers such as Kuppuswamy (1977) and Tilak (1989) have written about the obedience, care and respect that the elderly receive in Indian family tradition.

Some scholars (Raj and Prasad,1971; Ghosh,1974; Sharma and Dak,1987; K. Desai,1988) have studied the changes in both families and the role of the elderly. Vatuk, in more recent studies (1982, 1990) has also analysed the effect on the elderly of the changing family structure in India. She points out,

> It is not self-evident from the quantitative data on living arrangements of the elderly that are available from various parts of the sub-continent that their material and affective needs are being fully met, or that they actually receive the kind of obedience, respect and loving care that is commonly associated by social scientists with the extended family (1982:58).

In Vatuk's own words, "there is considerable evidence...that the reality is much less agreeable than the ideal. This is one area which must be emphasised in future investigations of the role of the aged in India" (1990a:100).

This chapter focuses on the effects of the changing family structure on Indians in the U.K from the perspective of the tension between the world of the ideal (on which women base their expectations) and that of reality which encompasses their day-to-day experiences.

It was suggested in the introduction that this tension is greater for elderly women, or women as they age, because of three factors: Firstly, the older women have more time to think of their idealized previous life. Secondly, they are anxious about their future in an alien country. Thirdly, older women have less physical strength to face and fight the daily challenges thrown up by practical and unfamiliar aspects of life in London, and so many escape into romanticization about life in an earlier home and place.

These factors may be universally applicable to all immigrants, but what makes this tension peculiar to the ageing experience of Indian women in the U.K? Does ageing in a foreign and western country exacerbate this tension? If changes in family structure and family life are accepted, what are the effects on the roles and expectations of elderly people? How do elderly people cope with these changes? The answers will be sought in this chapter.

Here I will combine the findings concerning the Gujarati and Sikh women because, as

has been seen, there are many similarities between the two groups. Initially, it was important to separate discussion of the Gujaratis and Sikhs in order to identify clearly the major areas of cultural and structural difference between them.

4.1. Changes in London

Many things changed in the lives of my informants on coming to London. Some of the obvious and common changes were:

(1) increased expenses in order to maintain a decent standard of living

(2) transformations in the working status of most women

(3) poorly paid jobs

(4) exposure to western life

(5) tasks associated with raising children in a western country

(6) absence or lack of relatives

(7) prevalence of working daughters-in-law

(8) presence of institutions like sheltered accommodation and old peoples' homes for the elderly

(9) provisions of various social welfare benefits

These are some of the obvious changes associated with life in London. These precipitated re-adjustments in their ideas and expectations regarding their life and relationship with various family members. These changes were a greater shock for women coming from India than for women coming from Africa, primarily because they were less used to the life abroad. Many had come direct from villages in Punjab or Gujarat. In addition, women coming from India were older and therefore less open to adjustment and adaptation to a new life-style.

The following sections focus on the struggle the women faced as they adjusted their expectations to the reality of life around them within their family, and with close family members.

4.2. Family structure

A number of studies conducted by social scientists discuss changing family structures in modern times. In countries like India where joint family households are the ideal,

some studies point to a break in this structure and a movement towards nuclear households. These are seen to be more common in cities but are increasingly present in villages. This view has been subjected to many critiques, which largely aim at showing that the joint family structure is not breaking down and that nuclear families also existed in the past; they are not, in other words, a product of modernization.

Another view claims that joint families are being modified and an *extended* joint family structure has emerged. In this model nuclear households are still joined together - spatially - and relatives meet frequently and take advice from family seniors. Harris explains the changes in family structure as a product of capitalism. She writes,

> With the development of generalised commodity exchange, there is only a case for treating domestic units as economically distinct and related only through exchange; that is, for asserting a discontinuity between intra - and inter - household relations (1981:142).

In view of this explanation we may agree with Gittins who, quoting from several studies, points out that,

> Early theories of family as a stable and universal institution composed of parents and children living together in relative harmony have been well and truly challenged - by radicals such as Laing (1960, 1971) and Cooper (1971) and by feminists in the 1970s and 1980s....While not denying that there have been important changes, too often these become exaggerated and oversimplified in an attempt to present a clear-cut model of `the family'. Families are not *clear-cut,* but are highly complex and often confusingly fluid social groupings....Moreover, it has been shown, notably by Berkner (1972) and Hareven (1982) that any one family will go through a series of different `types' over time (1985:1-8).

What family type can be observed among the Sikh and Gujarati families of my informants? Though statistically not very significant, the following tables give an indication of the nature of family structure of the Gujarati and Sikh women of my study.

TABLE 5: Nature of households of Gujarati and Sikh women Interviewed

Type of Household	No. of Gujarati Women	No. of Sikh Women	% of Gujarati Women	% of Sikh Women
Joint	2	5	3.33	8.33
Semi-joint	25	13	41.67	21.67
Nuclear	12	21	20	35.00
Single	18	14	30	23.33
Relatives	3	7	5	11.67
Total	60	60	100	100

As the above Table demonstrates, a greater proportion of Sikh women live in joint households compared to Gujarati women although in both cases they comprise a very small proportion of the overall total. Two of the Gujarati women living in joint families explained this in terms of economic considerations. Both the women said that they wished some of their children, especially their married sons, could move to another house. In both cases this was not possible because their sons' earnings were too small for them to be able to buy or rent a separate house and the parents were retired and on pensions so they could not apply for mortgages on their sons' behalf. Consequently they were to live as a joint family in a single overcrowded house.

While one Sikh woman gave the same reason for living in a joint family, the other four Sikh informants asserted that they "would not have it any other way". As Kamaljeet said "that is the custom in our community", meaning the Sikh community. Kamaljeet lives in a three bedroom house. She is married and her two married sons and their families, and also her nephew (brother's son) all live in the same cramped house. While the two married sons have their separate rooms, Kamaljeet and her husband have vacated their bedroom for their three grandchildren and nephew. Kamaljeet and her husband now sleep in the living room where they have a bed. Kamaljeet's husband sleeps on the bed, while Kamaljeet, in spite of her old age, sleeps on the floor, saying that a hard surface

is perhaps good for her back. She used to sleep on the floor in her village when she was young so for her it is not a new experience. When asked why at least one of her married sons could not move to another house, Kamaljeet protested saying that,

> My younger son has offered to move out to another house many times, especially when his child was born, and then when my nephew came to live with us, but no, I would not have that at all (*hargiz nahīṁ*)...at least not while I am alive. We have always lived in joint families in our village where though the house was bigger, the number of members were much more, but we never split (*alag hue*) so why here? There are many families splitting (*bikhar rahī haiṁ*) these days. I don't want my family to split. I have only two sons, at least they should live together. There are so many advantages in living together (*sāth rehne de*) so what if one has to put up with a little less space, at least everyone is together(*ikkaṭṭhā*).

When asked, "did the sons never object to the nephew staying with you when you were already short of space?" Kamaljeet replied,

> No, never, because in my community (*birādarī*), it is a custom (*rīt*) to help one another, even if they are not your relatives, so naturally when it is one of your relatives you don't turn him out of your house to stay alone. We would never do that and nor would my sons...so nobody said anything about my nephew...maybe once he gets married he will move out but not until then.

Kamaljeet's statement reflects community (*birādarī*) ideals lived and practised in villages in Punjab (Helweg,1979:73). Agnihotri, explaining the social fabric of Punjabi villages, writes,

> The governing principle of life in a village is sharing each others' happiness and sufferings at all levels....This is facilitated by a variety of functions and ceremonies which automatically provide avenues for social interaction and command participation....The community spirit is most strongly manifested at the level of a joint family....In addition to living together, there is a complex network of material and social obligations which keep the members of a family bound to each other...such a structure can be seriously threatened only by a high mortality rate or if a brother decides to live separately after marriage (1987:8-9).

But in Kamaljet's case she has not allowed that to happen. We may note that Kamaljeet has been in this country for over 25 years. Yet she is very comfortable in talking about her childhood days in a joint family and remembering the ideals of her *birādarī*. The reality of life and the smallness of her house compared to the number of family members has not made her compromise her traditional upbringing and religious values.

In her study of a high caste family in a village near Delhi, Vatuk discovered a similar vitality among joint families. She concluded that: "the cultural model of this ideal family persists and probably constrains members of this [high] caste more than others from resorting to household partition when intra-family tensions and competition for resources arise" (1982:67).

The point then is, if such a cultural model prevents families from splitting up in India, the reverse cultural model of a nuclear family may be taken as a possible influence on Indian families in Britain.

Many women saw "western patterns" of nuclear family residence as the reason for a son's desire to live separately, or reluctance to keep his older parents with him and his family. But the children often denied being influenced by what Indians see as a western model. They talked more of logistical factors (money and space) or personality clashes, as the cause of their desire to live separately in nuclear families.

However, the number of Sikh families living in joint households was very small overall, a Sikh community ideals were also evident in the seven cases of dependent women staying with their relatives. This compared with only three Gujarati women in similar positions.

What should be noted here is that, in the case of the Gujarati women, the relatives who provided shelter for them were consanguines from the women's side of the family rather than affinal relatives from the husbands' side of the family. In two cases, it was the women's brothers, and in one case her nephew (brother's son) who were keeping her in their house. In the cases of Sikh women, it was very often the husbands' family who helped them and provided for them in their houses. Only in one case out of seven was a woman staying with her brother's family because her husband's family had refused to keep her, since they blamed her for her husband's death and for not producing any sons. Usually, this was the reason given by Gujarati Hindu households for a woman's affinal family refusing to provide for her after her husband's death.

One of the Gujarati informants mentioned that she had been refused shelter in her husband's family, where she had lived in a joint family for the first fifteen years of her

married life before coming here with her husband. Her husband had died five years ago and her only son had also died in a car accident two years ago. But when she turned to her husband's family in India she was refused entry into the house of any relative because (as she said) she was considered *apśakun* [inauspicious] as both the men in her house had died. According to her the relatives described her as *ḍākan* (a witch who feeds on her own familly). The term, which one of the Sikh women quoted as being used against her in a similar situation by her affinal relatives, was *khasmo khāniyāṁ*, which literally translates as one who has eaten her husband.

The reported cases where the husband's relatives offered help and shelter to dependent women was on the sudden death of their husbands or if they were mistreated by their husbands. Usually relatives offered immediate but temporay support. Eventually most women had to live alone, usually in council accommodation. Eighteen Gujarati women and fourteen Sikh women lived alone in council accommodation. In almost all the cases this was because they had been unable to get along with their daughters-in-law and so had decided to move out. Conflict had arisen from temperamental differences and because of ill health. All these will be discussed in detail in the section on relationships between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law.

Vatuk has also highlighted the importance of personal factors in influencing the patterns of residence, for instance some parents have forceful personalities and managerial skills which enables them to keep the family united (1982:67). But my study found this to be relevant only in the case of the fathers. Women, around the age of sixty or widowed or dependent were often seen as weak and "mentally incapable" of taking any decision. Children would often use the term "*saṭhiyā gayī ho*" or "*saṭhiyā rahī ho*" (*sāṭh* means sixty and *saṭhiyā* is used in the nagative sense as "getting imbecile with age"). Children would rarely use this phrase for their fathers. Therefore older women were considered mentally incapable of making decisions. This according to Arber and Ginn [would] "reflect the social, mental and physical aspects of stereotypical view of elderly women" (1991:46). The only way a woman could escape this was if the ownership of the house came to her instead of going to her son after the death of her husband: this was usually the decisive factor in disputes over whether the mother could stay or should move out.

The two most common patterns of household among Gujaratis and Sikhs were nuclear and what may be called semi-joint households. Semi-joint households are those in

which older women (not necessarily dependents) live with their eldest son and his family[11]. The other children, mostly married (or un-married and working outside London) , establish separate households whether in London or elsewhere. These families do not always keep in close contact, nor is the advice of elders sought as such, particularly that of older mothers. Foner's (1984) argument that modernization affects women's status much less than men's is relevant here. In cases where the father is alive most children still keep in touch and consult the father on very important issues, but not always.

According to Table 5, 41.67% of the Gujarati women and 21.67% of the Sikh women lived in semi-joint households. This was usually with the family of their eldest son, or the eldest son and his family lived with the older parents, because the house was in the father's name and would usually go to the eldest son after the death of the father.

Most unmarried children continued to live with their parents, unless they were working or studying far away from their home or in another town. All other married children usually lived separately, though usually not very far away from their parents' home. In many cases the women said that their other married children lived "just round the corner" or "a few houses away from us" or "in the same area or locality". I found this to be true, so that both the parents and children visited one another and were available at an easy distance in emergencies, or if children needed their parents to baby-sit for their grandchildren. In this way, the children were able to keep sufficient distance from their parents, preventing their parents' direct interference in their day-to-day lives.

This brings into focus what Barot has termed as the "resilient" nature of Indian joint-families. He writes;

> Even when members of a family do not live under a single roof, they sustain social and cultural togetherness through regular visits and telephone calls. The nature of work, travelling and more dispersed settlement of family members may give the appearance of an increase in

---

11. Some writers call this a "stem family" but I distinguish semi-joint families from stem families on the basis of the fact that semi-joint families also incorporate dependent parents coming to stay with their married children. In stem families by contrast usually the parents stay with one married child and his family, while other children establish separate houses. In this case the older parents are already there and the married children stay wth them.

> the number of families consisting of parents and their juvenile children only. However, any systematic examination of such apparently nuclear families reveals the preservation of a sense of togetherness which is not only social and cultural in nature, but may also have a strong economic foundation where the family still pools resources to ensure that everyone does as well as they can (1994:76).

Though such aspects of "jointness" cannot be denied, they have also to be seen against the background of "tensions" among family members.

The 1978 Report by the Commission for Racial Equality sees the nature of migration and immigration restrictions as the reasons for the infrequency of Asian extended families in Britain, compared to those in the countries of origin (1978:17). However, none of the women resident in nuclear families in my study reported this as a factor explaining the minority of joint families in London.

More Sikh women (35%) lived in nuclear households compared to Gujarati women (20%). A similar phenomenon has been mentioned by Boneham in her study of Sikh women in a Midland town. She summarises the evidence of her surveys by saying "two myths have been exposed - that the elderly black or Asian individual expects to return back to his homeland, and that the extended family universally supports its elderly" (1989:48).

The reasons for living in nuclear households for both Sikh and Gujarati women were one or more of the following:

(1) The son or sons work in other parts of the U.K and the women themselves had or have their work here[12], so they cannot join their son or sons.

(2) The house is too small for two families. As a result and especially if there were two or more children, the married son and his family had to move out.

(3) The women did not want to share authority with their daughters-in-law.

(4) They could not get along with their daughters-in-law, so asked their sons and their families to live separately or they were asked to live separately, in cases where the son owned the house.

The varied residence patterns, as well as the higher rate in one community than the other of a certain type of residence pattern, can be explained more meaningfully when set

12. In some cases their husbands were still working.

alongside the marital status of the women from the two communities and it is this to which I now turn.

TABLE 6: Type of household and marital status of Gujarati and Sikh women interviewed

Type of H'hold	Married		Widowed		Separated		Divorced		Total	
	G	S	G	S	G	S	G	S	G	S
Joint	2	5							2	5
Semi-jt	17	7	5	4	2		1	2	25	13
Nuclear	6	21	3		2		1		12	21
Single			10	6	6	4	2	4	18	14
Relative			2	3		1	1	3	3	7
Total	28	33	20	13	10	5	5	9	60	60
%	46.67	55	33.3	21.67	16.67	8.3	8.33	15		

G - Gujarati

S - Sikh

While a close look at Table 6 shows a direct correlation between the marital status of the Gujarati women and the corresponding jointness of the type of household they live in, there was one exception, i.e, more married women among the Sikhs lived in nuclear households than in joint or semi-joint households.

This, can be explained once again by the caste distinctions in the Sikh community. Among the 21 married women who lived in nuclear households, 16 of them were Jats while five of them were Ramgardiahs. Likewise, out of the seven married women living in semi-joint households, five were Ramgardiahs and two were Jats. One can therefore suggest that more married Ramgardiah women lived in semi-joint households, or that more Jat women lived in nuclear families. The reasons can be deduced from what the women from the respective caste groups said.

Baljeet, a Jat woman said:

> I had to turn my son out of the house (*nikālnā paṛyā*) because I could not get along with my daughter-in-law. She wanted to control (*kabzā*) my own house. But she forgot that the house belonged to me and my husband. She was the outsider (*bāhar kī hai*). Just because I was getting old and not keeping well and she was doing more work, she thought that she was the head...so I had to ask my son to leave.

However, Kiran, a Ramgardiah Sikh who had a very similar experience to Baljeet, did not turn her son out of the house but continued to live with him and his family. She said:

> My husband owns the house and later if something happens to my husband the house will come to me but...we live almost like guests in our own house. My daughter-in-law runs the house as if she was the mistress of the house (*mālkan*). She is more educated and works for a good company and earns well so she tries to dominate (*hukūmat*) in the house too. At times I feel like asking my son to leave but then I feel that me and my husband are going to feel lonely without my son (as he is our only child) and our two grandsons whom we are very fond of (*cāhte haiṅ*). Also now I have my husband but if something were to happen to him, I would not like to live alone.

The next important point to note in the table is the higher rate of widows in both Gujarati and Sikh communities. Though this study did not focus specifically on the widows, it may be of particular importance to assess the nature of dependency and specific problems of the widowed elderly women in relation to the married elderly women. Arber and Ginn (1991) in their study found that half of elderly women are widowed compared with only a sixth of men (1991:21) and they note Delamont (1980) who "suggests that it may be widowhood *per se* which thrusts women prematurely into the life patterns of old age" (1991:21). This definitely agrees with my own findings where three of the women felt "suddenly aged" on the death of their husbands (discusesd in chapter 2.3a).

However, these structural changes in the family and marital status influence the status and position of older women in their families. Blakemore and Boneham believe that family roles, values and responsibilities are on the brink of major change (1994:79). A detailed analysis of the family life and relationships of the elderly Gujarati and Sikh women in my sample enables an assessment to be made of the nature of changes, in light of family experiences, and, in particular in relation to the effect of those experiences upon the ageing process of the informants in London.

4.3. Relationships

4.3a. Relationships with husbands

Among the Gujaratis the responses of Hindu women were a little different from the responses of Ismaili women, as can be seen from the following details.

The initial response of most Gujarati Hindu women, when asked about their relationship with their husband was, "it's good" (*sāro che*) or where the women were widows, "it was good" (*sāro hati*). However, talking about the relationship at length, most women ended up modifying or qualifying it (but for an outsider the relationship definitely remained "good"). This was the group of women who believed, in theory at least, that husbands were God (*pati parmeśwar*)[13]. They had been brought up with the notion that, once a woman is married, her husband is her God. She must care for him and give her unbound honest devotion as she would to a God. Rani, talking about this said:

> I still remember grandmother's preachings. Each night she used to read parts of the *Ramayana*[14] to me and used to talk at quite some length about the virtues of Sita as an ideal wife. Though I was quite young at that time, I still remembered most of what she used to say after I grew up and I remember them even to this day. So when I got married I naturally remembered all those examples of a good Hindu wife and how she must behave towards her husband....But it is very difficult to be a Sita in present times. Anyway how many husbands are Rama? My husband was also not Rama yet I did try to be closer to Sita for him.

Thus Rani spoke allegorically about her relationship with her husband. My next question to her was - why did she say that her husband was not Rama? What was he like and why could he not also try to be Rama? To this she replied with a long woeful story of her married life.

> My husband was not a bad man...he was better than many other men. But, he was a very short-tempered man. He never took even the slightest interest in me or our children. Helping with any house-work or with children's school work was completely out of question. Even if I had all

---

13. This was according to the Hindu scriptural belief.
14. A Hindu Epic which sets the ideal of manhood in the character of *Rama* and the ideal of womanhood in the character of his wife *Sita*.

> sorts of work to do, I was first supposed to do all his work, feed him on time, etc. Because if I was late in doing his things, then you should have seen his temper - it was as if a storm had hit you. Now is that human behaviour? It was a good thing that I was brought up in a way where a husband was supposed to be considered a God, and so I would do all his things even before he asked me and that is why our marriage and family survived. But if a girl was married to such a husband in present times, what would she do?....Anyway why I did not find my husband too bad was because at least he never abused me physically in spite of his short temper and also at least he provided for us and I did not have to work like many other women in London. That is why even though I did not have ideal relations (*ādarś saṁbaṅdha*) with my husband, they were not bad (*kharāb*).

Although Rani began by describing her relations with her husband as "good", she ended up by saying that they were "not bad". However, in spite of her husband not being ideal, Rani had been able to keep to what was "expected" of an ideal Hindu wife in the practice of her day-to-day life. Yet she acknowledged that contemporary individuals who had not been inculcated with such ideals would encounter great difficulties.

Rani's sentiments and experiences were very similar to those of three other Gujarati women in my sample who also described their relationship with their husbands as good (*sāri/sāro*) though they talked about a number of "deficits" (*kamiyāṁ*) and bad habits (*burāiyāṁ*) in their respective husbands. Yet none of them saw in their relationship any reason to complain, let alone protest, because they were doing what was expected of them according to the Hindu tradition.

In contrast to this predominant view among Gujarati Hindu women, most Gujarati Ismaili women, like Sikh women (both Jats and Ramgardiahs) spoke fairly critically about their relationships with their husbands. None of them described their husbands as "God" or even "next to God". Instead many of them talked about being "equal to their husbands"(*pati ni barābar*), as it is taught in their religion. One of the Sikh woman said,

> My mother always said that a husband and wife should behave as equals. They must share everything as equals. Our Gurus say that a man and a woman are equal but my mother also said that a woman has to respect her husband purely because he is older to her.

Kulbeer, a Ramgardiah Sikh woman, never thought of questioning her mother about cases where the husbands and wives did not have an age gap, but probably in those days, where most marriages were arranged, they made sure that a husband was older than his wife. In Kulbeer's case there was a nine year difference between her husband and her.

However the important point which almost all the Sikh women stressed was what Kulbeer's mother had said, namely, "our Gurus say that a man and woman are equal".

While many Sikh women said that they felt equal (*barābar*) to their husband, other Sikh women supported a remark made by Gurvinder, a Sikh Jat woman:

> Yes, our religion, our Gurus say that men and women must be treated as equals but that is only in scriptures; the society we live in is very different. This is very much a man's world (*mardoṅ di duniyā*). Men decide the rules and they are the clear rulers. Women always have to be below them. If women have to depend upon men to provide for them, men would certainly feel superior and women will have to look up to them if they have to survive...so even if our religion says we are equal to men, in real life we are not. Things may be different for women who are working and are not dependent on their men to survive but it's not so in my case.

Harmeet, a Jat woman, explained that this was the same in her case, but added

> In our village women were not allowed to go in for education, we were expected to help at our farms/fields. And though I did as much work on the farm and at home, I never got paid. So who makes these rules of payment? Anyway the fact is that men earn and women are expected to depend on them for clothing, food and shelter. So how can one be equal?

Thus, though, Sikh women did not treat their husbands as Gods or as superiors, many, particularly those who were not educated, acknowledged their economic dependence.

Sikh women who had worked or were working, mentioned that they had a more or less equal relationship with their husbands. However in most cases they acknowledged that they had to demand (*māṁgnā paṛā*) it as something which was their right (*haq*) as human (*insān*) beings and as Sikh women (*sardārnī*).

Pammi, a Jat woman, said:

> It is true I was not very educated but I could speak better Swahili and better English than my husband. I think I was good with languages, so I got a very good job as a receptionist in an office in Kenya. I earned more than my husband. After we came to London I got a job in a very good office and continued earning more than my husband. Gradually my husband began to resent that and he started asserting his authority at home. He would expect me to behave like a traditional Indian wife but

> then I could not serve him hand and foot (*hāth pair joṛ kar*) and do all the house work also and take care of the children too. I was only human and had a right to demand to be treated as one. So I had to tell him so or else I said that I would leave. And he knew that he could not bring up the children alone, so he stopped demanding and began treating me with more dignity, as it's said in our religion.

Thus Pammi transformed expectations of her as a traditionally subservient Indian wife who looks up to her husband to provide for her. She made her husband accept the reality of her earning power and recognize that her income was crucial to the survival of their family. In this she was able to invoke the traditional Sikh ideal of equal status with her husband. In other words, in a male dominated society, where reality helped men subjugate their wives, they ignored the traditions and ideals which eulogized an equal status between men and women. In London, female contributors to the family's income were able to reassert their egalitarian ideals.

Bhachu, talking about the effects of economic aspects on the household and status of Sikh women writes, "while most of the household tasks are still done by the women there is a blurring of the distinction between what was considered to be exclusive masculine and feminine roles. Thus there is a change in their status, making them more equal to their husbands than they were before they entered the labour market" (1988:92). However, Bhachu's study confirms that most women were not treated as equal by their husbands in spite of Sikh religious ideals.

While most Gujarati Ismaili women, like most Sikh women, believed in an egalitarian relationship between husbands and wives, they also acknowledged that men in their society make the rules, and that women have to look up to them. They still have to seek permission in most matters from their husbands, and, if they were staying with their in-laws, they would have to ask their permission too.

Often the husband-wife relationship was affected by joint family living, for in the absence of in-laws a husband behaved very differently towards his wife and a wife could behave differently too.

Rashmi, a Gujarati Ismaili woman, said:

> Mine was an arranged marriage and like it happens in Gujarati Hindu families I lived with my in-laws. My husband was a very nice man but I

> never got to spend much time with him except in the night. Living with in-laws you have to keep a certain distance (*dūr*) from your husband or else you are considered ill-mannered and indecent (*beśaram*). So you do not really come very close to your husband. All the major decisions are taken by the in-laws. Nothing really seems your own. But then six years after our marriage we came here because one of my husband's friends who was here got him a job and asked my husband to come here. It was after coming here that I really felt married. My husband would consult me for everything. We took all decisions ourselves. I managed the house on my own and I liked it that way. My husband helped with the house work when asked. But usually I did not need my husband's help or interference. For anything concerning the house and children I usually took all the decisions and for all outside matters my husband was the boss. So we had a perfect understanding. We respected each other and shared everything. It was a very happy twenty eight years I lived with him till he died of a heart attack. I really miss him. I was very happy with him here [in this country].

Similar sentiments were expressed by Shanjeet, a Sikh Jat woman:

> I enjoyed coming to stay in London not because I preferred it to India but because here I was free, I did not have to live with and listen to my in-laws or worry about elders. I could spend more time with my husband and feel free to talk to him, go out with him without feeling ashamed.

Rashmi's and Shanjeet's statements are an indication of how the husband-wife relationship changes when the family structure alters from joint to nuclear in the absence of in-laws. Not only do husbands and wives acquire a new-found privacy but as Vatuk points out, (women) "portray their mates as sympathetic potential allies, who are themselves unable to act independently because they too must submit to the authority of the elders" (1987:32). Thus free from such traditional restrictions, husbands were often supportive of their wives and consulted them on decisions regarding their children or other household matters. All this contributed to a closer relationship between husbands and wives.

However, the presence or absence of in-laws and other relatives was not always looked upon as a positive sign in the husband-wife relationship. Some Gujarati and Sikh women admitted that, particularly at times when the husband-wife relationship faced problems and strains, they wished for an elderly person to advise them, or support them, to talk things over with. The reasons for such crises, reported by Sikh and Gujarati women alike were: unfaithful, drunken, depressed and violent husbands who were usually experiencing frustrations in their jobs.

The presence of relatives was also seen as a crucial factor in determining the relative status of husband and wife in the family. If a woman had her parents and relatives in the U.K and her husband did not, then the wife would command a greater respect as the husband would be anxious that she could turn to her parents or relatives for support if he behaved badly towards her. In fact the extreme form of this fear, which engendered a higher status for women, was established in cases where the husband had stayed at his wife's house after marriage, i.e as *ghar-jamāī* (son-in-law of the house). Vatuk has pointed out that this has "low prestige socially, and it places a man under the control of his wife's parents (and even, perhaps his wife) in a community in which he is inevitably an outsider..."(1982:68).

In this, men are seen to compromise their masculinity through their dependence on their wife's family. However, convenience and economic factors had forced some husbands into this position in London. Also the fact that the husband's family and wider community were not around to ridicule them, enabled men to put up with it.

However husband - wife relationships undergo another major change when women approach late-middle to old age. By this time a woman's position in her husband's house is fairly well consolidated. Most men consult their wives on domestic matters and particularly concerning matters related to children (though the final decisions are still taken by husbands). By this time the husband's parents are likely to be dead, giving the wife the freedom she had always wanted. Also, frequently, as a result of many years spent together, there is a greater acceptance and confidence in each other. But this is usually a time of trouble for many women.

Often when I visited some of the informants in their home, they would be heard shouting at their husbands to help them with something, e.g, picking the clothes off the clothes-line in the garden, or stirring something that was cooking on the stove while they were attending to their grandchild; or, instead, asking their husbands to look after their grandchild while they were busy in the kitchen; or asking the husbands to go to the shop to buy something which was needed. While some men would respond to such requests, especially if it involved going out of the house, most other men would shout back saying that they were busy or, at times, ignore it completely, pretending to be asleep. This would leave the women grumbling and they would say to me in an impatient, tired and resigned voice "Oh, he's always been like that" or "he's never

listened to me so why do I even bother".

Though most women expect their husbands to co-operate with them in old age, they nevertheless feel that little will change as it is too late for their husbands to modify their habits.

In this, informants are perhaps suggesting that unless women themselves attempt to change their own status within the family in early or middle-aged years, they have little scope for doing that in their old age.

4.3b. Relationships with children

A number of studies have focused on second generation Asians in this country. These focus primarily upon an Asian child's relationship with his or her family. I refer to some of the major findings of these studies to give a more balanced picture of family relationships. This is relevant, because my own research focuses on how a mother sees her relationship with her child or children (a perspective lacking in the existing literature).

Catharine Ballard's study (1979) of second generation Asians tries to explain the conflicts, changes and continuities found among this group. She comes to the conclusion that their "Asianness" is very important. Her essential argument is that,

> The second generation of Asians in Britain may rebel against their parents' social and cultural values during their teens. The resulting clashes may lead some of them to seek outside help and support during this time. Yet by their late teens and early twenties, the majority of them do largely conform to Asian behavioural norms within the sphere of family and community life. Their "Asianness" is inevitably different in some respects from that of their parents. They have been brought up in, and have greater access to British society.Young Asians are adept, as are most adolescents, at making compromises enabling them to deal with two parallel worlds. Their "Asianness" however, as defined by them is their ultimate security (1979:47-53).

Thompson (1974), Taylor (1979) and Yates (1990), have made similarly interesting studies of second generation Asian youths in Britain, addressing issues like religion, marriage, friendship, employment and education, and finding a lot of conservatism in their responses, which were in most cases directly linked to their desire not to hurt or

disturb their parents.

In my study all the women - Gujaratis and Sikhs - who had to bring up their children in *bāhar ke deś* or *videś* (outside/foreign countries) said that they had a fairly difficult time (*ghano muśkil samay* -In Gujurati) trying to bring up their children. Although a fair number of women were happy that they had been able to bring up their child or children well, many women were also disappointed. The disappointed mothers were primarily the ones who were now living separately as a result of problems with their sons' families. Although in most cases the blame was put on the daughters-in-law, yet there was also a degree of disappointment with the sons as well[15].

A greater disappointment was expressed by those women who had brought up their children in India or in Africa in what they said was a "right and obedient" (*sāri rīte*- In Gujurati and *sahī* and *āgyākarī*- In Punjabi)manner, whose children, once married or after having come to London, had changed and did not care adequately for their old and sometimes dependent parents. This disappointment was expressed against sons rather than daughters.

These initial responses conveyed two things. Firstly, women had a clear view of the right way of bringing up children and, secondly, women faced problems in bringing up their children in foreign countries. These responses can be further analysed to gauge the nature of the mother-child relationship in Gujarati and Sikh families living in London.

When both Gujarati and Sikh women talked about having brought up (*parvariś*) their children in the right way (*sahī dhaṅg* - in Pubjabi and *sāri rīte* - in Gujarati), they emphasised the importance of their religious and cultural tradition. In particular this signified that the child was given a religious education and taught to respect and care for elders. The concept of *sevā*, which literally translates as "service", but here also means the provision of shelter and material benefits as well as deference, attention and love (Vatuk,1982:70), was drilled into a child's mind. *Sevā* was a child's *dharma* (moral duty).

---

15. There is a particularly intense desire among Gujarati Hindu families for a son, because a son is supposed to perform the funeral rites of his parents and he is also supposed to provide them shelter and support in their old age.

This concept of *sevā* was a part of the eldest son's moral world. This duty becomes particularly crucial once he gets married and his wife is supposed to share in his moral responsibility. If, for some reason, the eldest son is genuinely unable to perform this duty despite his good intentions, then the onus passes to the other sons and their wives.

Because they are seen as outside their natal family, daughters are exempted from this obligation. She acquires a corresponding obligation towards *her* in-laws. This duty has a religious sanction attached to it, i.e, if one performs the duty, one gets *punya* (blessings, merit) and after death, goes to heaven. If not, one would be cursed and go to hell.

A child has opportunities to prove that he or she had been well brought up. Firstly, by marrying in accordance with the parents' choice, and, secondly, for boys, when they undertake to look after their elderly parents. If a child does not fulfill either or both of these social and moral obligations, a mother considers herself as having failed (*hār gayī* - in Punjabi *and vāṅk hato* - in Gujarati) in bringing up her child well.

However, the mothers who brought up their children in India in extended families with grandparents present did not worry as much, because as one of them said, "given the atmosphere (*vātāvaraṇ*) at home, my children were very unlikely to drift too far from traditions. Also, they had the family and societal pressure to keep their behaviour in check". And as one Sikh woman and a Gujarati Ismaili woman pointed out, most schools in India, like the ones in their village, provided religious education, so a child was taught the same values inside as outside the house.

Doughty (1974) has identified the difference between primary and secondary socialization of a child as responsible for creating tensions; the child grows up in two worlds, as in the case of an Indian child growing up in Britain. In this case the primary socialization of a child is in the traditional norms which the parents expect that he/she would follow in life, but the child goes through secondary socialization in schools (i.e in the outside world) which reflects the general ethos of life in a western country. This makes a child very confused about desirable modes of behaviour.

It was precisely the lack of the above mentioned traditional and religious atmosphere

(*pāramparik aur dhārmik vātāvaraṇ*) that was the cause of anxiety for mothers who had to bring up their children in western countries. That is why most mothers who had brought up their children in Africa and particularly London, reacted seriously to this question. They all mentioned the difficulties and care they had to take while bringing up their children here. Difficulties were of the nature of protecting (*bacānā*) the child or children from exposure (*asar*) to and adoption (*apnānā*) of western habits and values. Because they were studying and mixing with children from all nations here, there had to be extra care about their religious education and education in their Indian/Hindu/ Sikh/Ismaili/Gujarati traditions. All the Ismaili women interviewed said that they had sent their children to special religious schools on one day of the week (these classes were often held on Sundays so that parents could take their children to these schools. Three of the Ismaili woman in my sample taught voluntarily at such schools every Sunday). Barot, talking about Muslims in Bradford, writes, "South Asian groups began to express a well-focused concern for sustaining their religion, language and cultures at a time when they were creating religious associations and institutions for their particular group or community" (1993:3).

Mothers also tried to make sure that the child mixed and socialised more with their own community, or at least with Indian children. As one of the Gujarati women said,

> When my children were young I took them to all our Indian festival celebrations even if I had to take leave from work and miss a day's pay, otherwise how were my children to learn about our culture and if they didn't know our culture how would they keep to it, how could they identify with it? This way it also gave my children an opportunity to meet and talk to our own community people where both my sons made friends and kept in touch with them later. As a result both my sons only had Gujarati friends. I was very happy with this. Even now my sons mostly have Gujarati friends. I think that they are happy that way and neither of them has any bad habits. So all my efforts have actually been worth it.

The above quote demonstrates the importance placed on the proper socialization of a child and the extent to which they see this as essential for the maintainence of their identity in a foreign country.

Such statements and observations reminded me of the *Satyanārāyaṇ Kathā* that I had attended at my local guardian's palce (though they are not Gujaratis or Sikhs) in Essex. The importance of the *Kathā* was not only to "thank God" for gracing their son with

medical degree but also to stress on their children and among their community members and friends (most of whom were from the same caste/community) their efforts at maintaining their cultural/ritual identity - in a foreign country. Now, I could also understand the statement of one of the guest who had told me "you will see more of this as all the Indian families take great pride in keeping Indian traditions", now I could also see why.

Kanitkar, who has noted the importance of *Upnayana* ritual in maintaining the Hindu identity among the Maharashtrians living in Essex writes, " this informal intra-group socialization has resulted in the survival of aspects of a traditional value-system deemed supportive when facing the challenges of a new socio-cultural environment" (1993:112).

As in India, and as in Indian traditions, both Gujarati and Sikh women acknowledged being "stricter" (*sakhtī*) with their daughters than with their sons, because daughters are symbols of family and community honour, and honour had to be maintained. As one of the Gujarati women said,

> A girl is like a gift (*parku thāpaṇ*) to somebody [meaning her husband's family], therefore she must be protected carefully. That's the way I was brought up and that's the way I have brought up my daughter. You see, she has to go to someone else's house and nobody would accept her if her reputation (*izzat*) is tarnished (*bagṛelī*)...so naturally I have to be more careful and stricter on her than my son.

It is understandable that Gujarati Hindu women say this for Hinduism maintains a hierarchical relationship between sexes. Yet, although Sikhism and Islam talk of equality between the sexes, in the words of one Sikh woman who represented the views of most other Sikh and Ismaili women: "yes, this discrimination between girls and boys is unfortunate but the truth is that women in our religion are given the responsibility of being custodians of our family's and community's honour so we have to be more careful than men and controls on us therefore are stricter than on men".

While some women wished for a role reversal, so that men would be made to carry the burden of the family and community honour, others took pride in the responsibility. As one Sikh woman stated, "we are as our Guru Har Gobind ji calls us, `the conscience of man'". This, for many Sikh women, was a matter of pride and they felt this elevated their status in the sexual hierarchy.

Sharanjeet Shan, in her autobiographical book, In My Own Name, wrote,

> I want to say loud and clear that the events that occurred in the twentieth year of my life in the name of *khandan's izzat* [honour of the family] left a whole lot missing from my and my son's lives (1986:3).

Shan alludes here to her marriage, which was arranged by her parents without her approval, but to which she had consented to save the family's honour. Her biography tries to show this to be a "false" concept, for which girls should not be made to pay through the sacrifice of their lives.

As stated earlier, the first test of an obedient child was his or her consent to the parents' choice of spouse for them. This is sometimes his/her first direct conflict with the expectations of his/her family.

Parents of daughters sometimes sought to avoid future problems by either marrying her early, or, if the daughter was allowed to study further, by making sure that she understood the rules of interaction, particularly as many girls in Britain went to co-educational colleges. Most parents disapproved of this (Helweg,1979:66) but saw little option if they were to educate their children. However they made sure that the child knew the limits of acceptable behaviour.

Sushila, a Jat Sikh woman whose daughter had gone to college to study law, said

> I remember that when my husband had given permission to my daughter to go to College, he had said, `Kiran remember that although you are going to a co-educational college, watch yoursteps. If you by any chance or by any action of yours, drag my name in the dirt (*merā nām miṭṭī ce pāyā*), I will kill you and kill myself'. And he meant it. It was important to warn my daughter against falling in love with a boy from any other community because we had to arrange her marriage in our community and if her name had been spoilt (*saṛ* - literally translated as "rot") we would not be able to marry her or any of our other children into respecatble Jat Sikh families and we would also have not been able to show our face.

Almost 90% of the children of my Sikh and Gujarati informants had married within their caste, or else within their community, as arranged by their parents. However, unlike the Gujaratis, many Sikh parents went to their villages in the Punjab to choose spouses for their children. One of the reasons for this was that first generation Sikhs in

England (at the time) were fewer in number so they had problems in finding matches for their children in their caste group. Secondly, as Ballard (1976) pointed out Sikhs were still quite close to their parents and relatives in their villages in India, and they could easily find a match for their children in England.

Thirdly, as James (1974) points out, Sikhs thought it more desirable to find wives for their sons from India rather than finding husbands for their daughters from India. This was true for my informants, and the reasons were as given by James.

> Many parents considered that girls brought up in England will be rebellious and discontented wives, and as they will have grown up in divided `nucleated' families, they will be less willing to share in family duties. Girls from India will, of course, usually have a mother-in-law in Britain, so the sheltered environment of the Punjabi household will be recreated even more faithfully for these girls than it could have been for the first generation (1974:85).

James goes on

> If the importance of wives from the Punjab continued as a regular pattern, they will become a very important conservative influence in the community, maintaining religious and social traditions and offsetting the "westernized" character of their British Sikh husbands (1974:85).

James notes other reasons why Sikh parents preferred Indian girls for their sons:

> Sikh boys educated in Britain can command high dowries from their wives' families even if they leave school at the age of 16 - they are as "expensive" as graduates in India (1974:85).

So this is why, James says, Sikh parents are concerned that their daughters should get as good an education as their sons, because,

> Education is regarded to some extent as a way out of the vicious circle of the dowry system, as it also bypasses the caste system. An educated girl can hope for a much better marriage than she would otherwise get with the dowry which her parents could afford (1974:85).

However, the women in my sample did not speak openly about issues of dowry. None of them mentioned demanding dowries for their son's marriage but they complained about having to give dowries for their daughter's marriage.

In both the Sikh and Gujarati marriages which I attended large dowries were clearly given by the bride's father. The items of the dowry ranged from clothes for the boy, clothes for his entire family, watches, household items like furniture, television, VCR, stereo, and very often it included cars for the use of the son-in-law. There was jewellery of gold, silver and pearls for the bride and sometimes for her mother-in-law as well. Above all cash was given[16].

Some of the girls' parents mentioned aspects of British immigration law that created problems in importing husbands for their daughters, leaving these women with little choice but to find Sikh boys from their own caste in England. As a result Sikh boys were in great demand and the dowry price for them rose. However, Sikh parents preferred to educate their daughters or pay this dowry rather than have their daughters marry and leave them to go and settle in India. But today, there are signs of a change. The Report by the Commission for Racial Equality (1978) mentions that "most of the experts interviewed felt that arranged marriages presented difficulties for young Asians:
(i) because the children were becoming less willing to accept their parents' choice without discussion;
(ii) because there is a lack of suitable marriage partners;
(iii) because of the freedom and example of their British peers.
There was a fairly widespread belief amongst the experts that the system of arranged marriages would probably break down in future" (1978:25).

In view of the findings of my study I find the above statement of the Commission rather presumptuous. None of the children I informally spoke to were against arranged marriages. They clearly stated that they were not in favour of marrying a girl or a boy from India. Some children admitted that they had stipulated to their parents that they would marry within their community only if the person was born or raised in this country. While the parents considered this emotional blackmail, the children said that they felt very uncomfortable with the cultural gap that, according to them, exists between children raised in Britain, and those raised in India.

In contrast to the children who married according to their parents' choice of spouse,

16. More recently, in a Gujarati (Patel - a Bania caste) wedding that I attended, the bride's father had bought the house for his daughter (as a dowry present) and was to pay the mortgage for it.

about 10% of the Sikh and Gujarati children had wanted to marry outside their community, caste and religion but in all these cases, the children had been finally forced to accept arranged marriages of their parents' choice. A Gujarati Hindu woman whose son wanted to marry a Muslim girl said,

> We could not agree to that. We could never live with that girl. So we opposed it and told the girl's father to forbid his daughter to do this and so we finally got our son married to a Gujarati girl from our own caste...and they are as happy as most couples...at least their children speak the same language and worship the same Gods.

In the above conversation it was interesting to note that the women said, "we could never live with that girl" implying that her son's wishes were of secondary importance to her own compatability with her daughter-in-law (she was judging this compatabilitty in terms of her reputation in her caste group).

There was, however, one case where a Hindu Gujarati woman's son had married a Sikh girl by running away from home because both the parents opposed their marriage. As Lalita said,

> Yes, my son got married to that girl, but then they had to get out of both the families and communities. We were not willing to accept it. If we had opposed it, we could not go back on that after they were married. My husband was very strict. I have got used to the idea of having lost a son permanently. They live in Nottingham now, in an English colony, because neither the Sikh nor Gujarati communities would accept them really. I hope they have learnt their lesson. I don't care (*parvāh nathi karti*) at all now. But it does hurt (*duḥkh thāyi che*) and I feel embarrassed (*śaram āve che*) when somebody asks me. The community is very sympathetic towards us because they know that our son did this to us and because we turned them out of our house and kept up our tradition.

Thus Lalita was not so perturbed about losing her son as ashamed of him. She was happy that at least she had kept up her Gujarati Hindu tradition and the community's and family's honour. Our conversation could not uncover the woman's true feelings, for though her words were as quoted, her eyes were brimming with tears while talking about this.

The young couple, we may note, was also not accepted in the girl's family, because as her mother said, her daughter had "spoilt" (*kharāb*) their family's name (*nām*, meaning `good reputation') and honour (*izzat*). So she had to be turned out of her house as well,

as her marriage outside the community was completely unacceptable in the traditional sense. Because if the parents accept this marriage, the family would lose their name, honour and be embarrassed (*badnām, beizzat and śarmindā*) and again in the words of the woman "nobody from our *birādarī* [localised community group] would help us ever". This aspect has also been explained by Ballard.

> ...the term *biradari* is widely used which is the primary arena for social interaction for most South Asian migrants. It is to risk their kinsmen that they look for support in times of trouble, it is amongst their kinsmen that they compete for and dispute about honour and prestige, *izzat*, and it is from their kinsmen that they fear sanctions (the worst of which is expulsion) if they behave in a manner which is considered to be deviant (1990:153-154).

In the words of my informant this support is more crucial because

> we need our biradari's support because we are so few in England; whom would we turn to for help if our community turned us out? In India, today, people can accept mixed marriages because they can turn to somebody for help, but not in this country. So we need to be stricter.

In this case women have used the reality or experiences of their life in Britain to justify their traditional stance on caste and community marriages.

The views of women on issues of the marriage of their children were also influenced by the films which were shown in the video club at the Asian organizations (Milap and Asian Women's Forum). One of the movies shown at both places was Love Story[17] which depicts the plight of children from two different Indian communities who want to get married, but cannot because of parental disapproval. They run away from their homes and are about to get married when their parents discover them and attempt to separate them; however the children still manage to stay together. This convinces the parents of the true love which their children have for each other and they decide to remove their opposition and community barriers by accepting the couple, and arranging their marriage.

Most women who saw this movie typically commented with statements like

> It only happens in movies, there is nothing like true love...it is difficult

---

17. Produced and directed by Rajendra Kumar in 1980.

> to merge the two separate cultures of the communities...while one is in love it does not matter but once one comes to the family with a different culture, then the problems start for both sides...we know this, we have seen this, that is why we see this as unrealistic.

In addition, they would substantiate this hypothesis with examples of how such marriages of which they were aware have failed. Thus there was a culturally rational explanation provided for their dismissal of "true love" and opposition to "love marriages" as they are commonly termed in the Indian community.

The second serious test for a child (usually the son)[18] was whether in these cases where the house was in his name he supported his old parents or dependent mother (whether widowed or separated). The greater test was, would he still keep his mother[19] if his wife did not get along with her.

If a woman was not staying with her son, she usually expressed her disappointment saying that perhaps she failed in bringing up her child or children in the right way. However, more often the blame would actually accrue to the daughter-in-law who it was claimed had influenced her good son (*sāro chokro* - in Gujarati) and changed him (*badli nākhyo* - In Gujarati) as well as turned him against (*virudh* - In Gujarati) her.

Many women, therefore, complained about the squandering of their efforts in bringing up their children. In some cases the women also blamed western society and its preference for nuclear households which they believed had influenced sons to break away from the family and set up on their own. Some women lived in nuclear houses not as a result of their own choice but because of their son's choice. Diljeet said,

> My son said, "*Māi* I want privacy, my child needs a separate room to

---

18. In both Gujarati and Sikh households there is a desire for a son. In both communities the belief is that a daughter once married is not considered one's own any longer. She has been gifted to her husband's family and now belongs to them; parents are considered as guests in their married daughter's house and traditionally would not accept anything from their daughter's house. If they did they would usually pay for it. So all expectations rest upon one's son as the only source of support in ones old age.

19. A lot of discussion on the way in which a son's attitude changed towards his mother with the coming of his wife was generated after showing Hindi movies which addressed such themes.

> study so I have to move out of this house...in India we would never use words like privacy or need a separate room to study. We always shared and cared for others...our religion teaches us this which I remember teaching my son...the words that my son used were all English ideas which have influenced him more. I couldn't forcibly keep him so he moved out and left me with my unmarried son and daughter in the house....Actually, I was scared that this might happen some day if we continue to live in this country. So if you want to stay here to gain something you have to be ready to lose a lot more. I have lost my son and my security for old age and what have I gained, some social security money and lots of hours of loneliness and regret...believe me it's a fate worse than death (*maut se battar*).

Thus Diljeet's education of her son in the values of sharing and caring were interpreted by him in the more narrow sense of sharing and caring for his own. Diljeet sees this as one consequence of Western influence. Thus "a tradition...with its emphasis on *dharma* and *sevā* is in real conflict with a culture that places highest value on freedom, individual initiative, and privacy" (James,1974:97) and brings for Diljeet in her ageing years a `fate worse than death'. As Romijn has pointed out, it is aspects like nuclear patterns of residence (because of lack of space), long working hours of family members and poor salaries which affects the care and *sevā* of the elderly (1976:29).

Another western institution which was the cause of much anxiety to many ageing Sikh and Gujarati women is the growing number of Old Peoples Homes and Sheltered Accommodation for the elderly in London.

The presence of these Asian Sheltered Residential Accommodations [ASRA - also means care and support in Hindi] are perceived by the elderly women as a symptom of the destruction of Indian joint families in the face of western influences (Scivyer,1984). However writers like Bhalla (1981), Norman (1985) and Patel (1990), have given pragmatic reasons for the need for Asian sheltered housing in London.

While accepting that the traditional support structure offered by the Indian joint family system has changed with immigrant family life in London, Norman adds

> The housing shortage in general and in particular the lack of large dwellings in which an extended family can be properly housed create severe overcrowding....Those who are old experience the same disadvantages, but they are often compounded by increasing physical disability, family tensions, loss of family support as younger people move out of the inner city, fear of racial harassment and physical assault, and social isolation(1985:45).

However, the presence of these homes, instead of relieving the elderly women of the anxieties of homelessness and lack of care in their old age, has increased their anxieties about their future, since it is thought that children may at any time refer them to such an organization when they want to get rid of them. One Sikh woman said that her son had been asking her if it was alright with her to stay in an Asian old peoples' home temporarily while he holidays with his family in America. The woman was reluctant to agree because she feared that the so-called temporary feature might soon become a permanent one.

However in spite of such fears, Asian Sheltered Residential Accommodations have already developed in Wandsworth, Lambeth, Southall (Milan), Romford (Aram House) and Camden (Norman,1985:46-47). There are several other Sheltered Houses and Homes for the elderly (that I came to know of) in the Boroughs of Brent, Ealing and Haringey (where I did my fieldwork).

While the houses in Wandsworth and Lambeth and Homes in Brent cater for both Asian men and women, houses in Southall, Romford and Camden are exclusively for Asian men. This indicates that while fewer Asian dependent women are forced to rely on their own resources, as often their sons or relatives provide them shelter, more Asian men are left to fend for themselves in old age because men are considered stronger (*tākatvar*) and courageous (*himmatvar*) (to women, who are seen as *kamzor*, "weak"), even though they may be dependent, widowers or suffering from physical ailments. This difference in the perceptions towards and provision of social resources for men and women deserves future research.

4.3c. Relationships with grandchildren

The influence of the West is also widely thought to have affected relationships with grandchildren.

In traditional family systems, grandparents have very important positions and are usually regarded with veneration and respect, for, having lived long and through many family crises, they are regarded as possessing an accumulated wisdom.

As grandparents grow older and are relieved of the more arduous family duties, they have more time for their grandchildren, and deep bonds of affection often develop between them. The literature on this relationship argues that the relations between grandchildren and grandparents are invariably harmonious as against those between parents and children which are supposedly marked by conflict. Radcliffe Brown writes "grandparents and grandchildren are persons with whom one can be on free and easy terms. This is connected with an extremely widespread, indeed almost universal, way of organizing the relations of alternate generations to one another" (1952:79).

However, given the nature of women's greater involvement in work and its consequent effects on family life, the role expectations and the life course events of the ageing population have also undergone changes. For example, an aged woman's retirement from work effectively confines her to the home. In most cases a woman's free-time is well taken care of. If the daughter-in-law is working, the responsibility of childcare rests increasingly with the aged women. These aged women, far from being able to retire into a life of prayer and introspection, often find themselves working full time in a new capacity as child-minders.

This may be seen to have three important effects. Firstly, it is responsible for the increasing tensions between grandparents and grandchildren. Secondly, it may also, paradoxically, be responsible for the perpetuation and preservation of tradition within the Indian community, thirdly, it makes it possible for both parents to work and fourthly, the role of elderly women can be seen as "carers" rather than only as somebody "needing care". These views are analysed in the context of the relationships between Sikh and Gujarati grandmothers and their grandchildren.

Some grandmothers in my study said that they enjoyed a compatible and happy (*mel-jol and khush*) relationship with their grandchildren. Kamala (now a retired teacher) who had two grandsons aged 15 and 12, said,

> Oh, I have a very good and loving relationship with both my grandsons....Because I was a teacher in the same school where my grandchildren are, they both look up to me with a lot of respect. Yet I spoiled them with my love too. I have taken a very active part in bringing up both my grandsons. Being a teacher, we used to return at the same time from school and eat together. I used to read them stories from our rich mythological traditions. I used to teach them and see to their home work. My son and daughter-in-law do not have the faintest idea of what

> to do with their children. But they both respect me for having done this for their children. Now that I am retired and my grandsons who are a bit older and have their own peer groups and their studies are also quite advanced, our interaction and routine has changed a bit. But even today, when they have a problem they generally come to me, because I suppose they still see me as a teacher....I also sit and watch their video programmes with them. It helps me to learn what these little children learn from these days and I am in touch with the latest. I have come to know a lot about the life around the world from the children's videos. It is very important to have a wider knowledge than that of just your own tradition, that's what I believe. Anyway, I also watch these children's programmes with them because I enjoy my grandsons' company this way and don't get bored or left out at home particularly as I am retired now and also a widow...so I certainly have a very close and loving relationship with both my grandsons. I am perhaps their best friend as well and more of a parent than their own parents. I am very lucky.

We may note that the happy relationship between alternate generations cannot be taken for granted. Often, some strategic thinking is required to make a grandmother's relationship with her grandchildren a happy one. A grandmother has to be keen and willing to take a step towards understanding a grandchild's world, because the gap between the expectations of one generation and the other is very wide. The grandmother and grandchild operate within two different sets of cultural knowledge and thought and inevitably, the onus falls on the grandmothers to come closer to their grandchildren. They have to be able to moderate their traditional expectations with an understanding of their grandchildren's experiences in a western country. Where they do, they generally enjoy a better relationship with their grandchildren.

But then, cases like Kamala were few. Women mentioned various tensions and problems in their relationships with their grandchildren.

In London, where most young mothers have to go out to work, a greater responsibility for the care of the young child is placed on grandparents. This increases an aged woman's roles and responsibilities, and also serves to question some of the presuppositions of the theory of ageing. In a cultural milieu where the grandparents are seen as repositories of a traditional culture and care for children growing up in a western culture, their relationship is subject to strains.

Most of the informants (Sikhs and Gujaratis alike), mentioned a gradual change in the relationship as the grandchild or grandchildren grow up (*dhīre-dhīre saṁbaṅdh badlāvo*). In the words of one of the grandmothers (Gujarati),

> I had a very normal(*sāmān*), happy (*khush*) and loving (*prem*) relationship with my grandchildren when they were young. I would read to them or tell them stories, usually mythological stories from *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* or of *Eklavya*[20] or *Shravan Kumar*[21] and they would enjoy it very much. I had to repeat these stories each night until they were four or five years old. I used to pick them up from school, get them home, feed them and then they would want to hear stories from me or play with me. I used to play cricket with my grandchildren in our backyard. But children grow very fast. Soon they made friends in school and suddenly before I knew they were speaking in English all the time, because their parents were speaking in English to them too. And when I would protest and say that at least at home the children should speak our mother tongue, both my son and daughter-in-law would tell me off saying that it is important to speak in English to children and help them improve because it was important if they had to do well at school. So gradually my grandchildren would communicate much less with me. Also, exposure to school and life here made them get into a world of comics, videos, video games. My stories or our cricket games were no longer interesting or needed, so though I continued to feed my grandchildren when they got back from school, that was perhaps the only time I really spent with them. Soon I began to realise that my grandchildren were becoming very indifferent (*beparvāh*) to my presence....It was because I was generally treated with indifference by both my son and his wife and because children learn from what they see and so because I was not consulted (*salāh*) or cared (*khyāl*) for by my own children, my grandchildren also began to treat me the same....now both my grandsons are 12 and 14 years of age and we have very little in terms of affection as such, though I am still not indifferent. It hurts me greatly that I am not close to my grandchildren and they don't really care for me, particularly when it was me who brought them up...it is not gratitude (*ābhār*) but at least some respect which I want from them but what can I do?...I won't be surprised if my grand children pick up more western habits because their parents don't control them or teach them any Indian things and I no longer have any influence or time with them. I feel very bad about this, but again, what can I do?

Thus Deena introduces the important distinction between the "child-caring" and "child-rearing" role of grandmothers, in light of which Cunnigham-Burley (1984, 1985) who seesthe role of grandmothers as socially valued can be qualified. Since child-minding services are expensive in Britain, most grandmothers' services are used in this way. But, when it comes to taking important decisions regarding the upbringing of their children, parents prefer specialised help (of health visitors, teachers, etc), usually ignoring the older women's experience and recommendations. Thus most grandchildren drift away

---

20. A Hindu mythological story. *Eklavya* is remembered for his bravery and honesty.

21. A Hindu mythological story. *Shravan Kumar* epitomises total dedication, service and devotion to one's parents.

from their grandmothers once they are out of their direct care. Also, most grandmothers, like Deena, cling to their early memories of caring for their grandchildren and occasionally telling them mythological stories as their only source of closeness in this relationship. However an important question here is, how many grandmothers would enjoy such storytelling experiences when the television versions of the Epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are available on video for children to see in action and colour? Now, grandmothers' knowledge of traditional literature is evoked only to fill in the gaps in a grandchild's understanding of events depicted in the television version of the Epics. For example, when grandchildren would want to know the full story of *Shravan Kumar* because his life had been mentioned only in passing reference in the *Ramayana* (on video). More recently I saw children asking their parents and grandparents to tell them more of the story of *Chanakya* which was being televised on BBC2 in a serial form. On such occasions grandmothers felt very happy and indulged their grandchildren with details of *Chanakya*. Of course the whole family including the grandchildren would religiously sit to watch *Chanakya* each Saturday on television.

Often also, when I visited the houses of my informants in the afternoon, I would generally see the grandchildren seated in front of the television set watching videos of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* or *He Man* or *Batman* or Walt Disney's *Jungle Book*. These were some of the most popular videos among children and included a blend of western and Indian characters.

While many grandmothers were not happy about their grandchildren watching English videos, they saw some logic in the fact that as the children were studying in a western country and needed to learn English, it was important for them to see and learn through these videos. Several grandmothers even said that they wished they had more videos of Indian mythological stories as that was the best way for their grandchildren to learn about their culture.

These changes are particularly crucial to the survival of the oral tradition, which in Indian society is seen as important for forging links between generations. Parry (1985) has noted how the Brahmanical tradition in India with its literate oral tradition has helped forge a link between past and present, and define what is to be expected in the future, thus preventing a conflict of expectations within social groups. In families, the people who are mainly responsible for reproducing the oral tradition are the

grandparents, especially the grandmothers as narrators of mythological and classical Indian stories to their grandchildren. All this is currently subject to change as more and more grandchildren prefer to speak English at home, while their grandmothers cannot speak English. Bhatti sees this as the main barrier between grandchildren and grandparents in Britain (1976:115).

Therefore most grandmothers are not very happy to "play second fiddle" to the television and videos as agents of passing on traditional cultural knowledge to their grandchildren. But many are just glad that at least their grandchildren are learning about their culture even if it's not through them.

Deena has lost out on the traditional love and respect that she expected to receive from her grandchildren. Her increased activity in feeding and taking care of the grandchildren in her advanced years has not brought her any closer to her grandchildren. It has not brought her happiness but only frustration, disappointment and possible feelings of disengagement. These above observations support Cogwill and Holmes' (1972) claim that new ideas and technologies have undermined traditional attitudes, shifting the initiative towards younger people.

Although this research in its limited scope does not account for the views of younger generation, in my informal talks with some grandchildren of age groups 10-12, a common complaint was that they found their grandmothers "rigid in their views" or of "*purāne khāyālāt*" (upholding old/traditional views), or as one Sikh boy of sixteen said about his grandmother, "she is an old Indian woman. I was born here. I don't agree with what she says. She always talks about India. She wants us to change and live like they live in her village. Why can't she change. We are living here not in her village".

This more or less sums up the position of grandmothers vis-a-vis their older grandchildren in this country. Not only are the grandmothers not always respected for their traditional wisdom and experience but rather thay are expected to change with the reality of life in Briatin - which as my study shows, grandmothers are quite resistant to, even "rigidly" opposed to it, as some of the children commented.

However one event which does forge a link between generations is the *Navrātrī* festival (nine days of worshipping the female principle of *shaktī*, in the forms of various Hindu

Goddesses) in the Gujarati community. The festival is celebrated with much joy, dancing and singing. Everyone wears new clothes and wishes each other well. Differences and grievances are forgotten temporarily. Members of the family and community meet in the evenings to celebrate with the *ḍāṇḍiyā* and *garbā* dance - Gujarati folk dances. Men, women and children of all ages participate in the dances and in singing devotional and folk songs.

This recalls Connerton's work How Societies Remember (1989) where he has explained the role of commemorative ceremonies in forging a link between past and present through generations, and also how these are responsible for maintaining social stability and equilibrium. But this happens only during the annual *Navrātrī* celebrations, and the event is too brief to outweigh all the tensions in the relationships between generations, or to maintain traditions under the impact of the diversity of cultural forces to which children of South Asian descent are subjected in London.

This is where the role of Asian organizations (such as those where I did my fieldwork) is crucial for maintaining relations between generations and keeping Indian culture alive. These organizations celebrate the major and minor Indian festivals of all communities; all National holidays of India are observed, such as Independence Day and Republic Day. Birthdays and death anniversaries of all national heroes are also remembered with special programmes devoted to them. On these occasions children not only learn about Indian culture but learn to identify with it in a more meaningful way than when they are given sermons on their traditions and values by their parents or grandparents.

However, most grandmothers, whether educated or not, whether sufficiently respected or not, acknowledged a difference in their relationship with grandsons as opposed to grand-daughters. This is attributed to the different socialization of girls and boys (Rosaldo,1974:25-26; Ortner,1974:81-82). Grand-daughters, who because they spend more time at home with their grandmothers (particularly where their mothers are working), often help them with various household chores. In the process they learn many household jobs from their grandmothers (even more than they learn from their mothers, if the mothers are working). This allows a closeness to develop between a grand-daughter and grandmother, and since girls are generally less exposed to the outside world than boys the gap between generations can be more easily bridged. There

is less likelihood of conflict between a grandmother's and grand-daughter's ideas. Thus a grandmother's and grand-daughter's relationship is rather special and requires much less effort to maintain than does a grandson's and grandmother's relationship in this country.

4.3d. Relationships with daughters-in-law

In Indian families, and as reported in most other cultures, the mother-in-law / daughter-in-law relationship is usually depicted as one of tension and conflict, and is used as a basis for many jokes and much ridicule. Kapadia identifies the tension between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law as lying in the "conflict arising out of the dominance of the latter over the former." (1955:245).

In some cases, although there is no actual dominance, there is an effort or pretence of dominance. In other words, most of the problems in this relationship arise from a conflict between expectations (based on the ideal) and the experiences of daily domestic relations.

Vatuk, in her studies of elderly people in Delhi, has pointed to this key factor. Commenting on elderly women or women whose sons have married and brought a daughter-in-law into the house (and who in terms of the *varnāśramadharma* have made the transition from *grahastha* to *sanyās*) she notes:

> To leave *Grahastha* involves two aspects: first, a readiness on the part of the *Bahu* (daughter-in-law) to take over the onerous household tasks formerly performed by the *Sas* (mother-in-law) with the indifferent assistance of her daughters, and second, a readiness on the part of the older woman to give up her managerial role and a feeling that she alone is responsible for and capable of managing household affairs. These two rarely coincide. While the former is generally accomplished within a week or two of the daughter-in-law's arrival, the latter is, typically, a very gradual process of withdrawal that may take many years and may never be completed before the senior woman's death. The symbolic act of "handing over the keys" to the daughter-in-law is usually resisted unto the end. In fact, although elderly women are usually often chided - and chide one another - for being "too much bound up in *Grahastha*", it is actually rare in this community for any woman to voluntarily cease taking some responsibility for the work of the household and its organization until she is either mentally or physically quite incapable of doing so (1975:155).

However, Indian literature is also replete with examples which show the young wife at

the centre of the household and the old mother-in-law being constantly ignored, chided and at times even treated quite cruelly by the young daughter-in-law. A classic depiction of this can be seen in Satyajit Ray's (1955) brilliant film *Pather Panchali*. This is a stereotypical image. But stereotypes work both ways.

During the time I was interviewing the women at Milap and the Asian Women's Forum, I requested that a particular Hindi movie should be shown. It is called *Sau din sās ke*[22] (Hundred days of a mother-in-law), suggesting that a mother-in-law has a big influence over the life of her daughter-in-law, but that this is so for a short period. This movie depicts the relationship between a mother-in-law and her two daughters-in-law. The mother-in-law is all-powerful and an authoritarian figure in the family, even after the death of her husband, for she owns the house and makes sure that she works on her son's affection as a widow. Her older daughter-in-law is a traditionally dutiful daughter-in-law doing all the house-work and serving her mother-in-law by carrying out all her orders, etc. But the situation changes the day her younger daughter-in-law comes to the house. She is an educated girl who has grown up in a city. She out-smarts her mother-in-law and in addition encourages her elder sister-in-law to stand up for her rights in her husband's family. In the end the mother-in-law is made to realise the vulnerability of her position as an old, uneducated, widowed woman in the house, and she becomes dependent upon the mercies of her daughters-in-law who are now in posession of the household keys (symbol of domestic authority).

The comments from women at Milap and the Asian Women's Forum at the end of the movie included

> This is what is happening these days...mothers-in-law have no position...it is *bahu kā rāj* [daughter-in-law's rule].

and

> Even if one does not perpetuate atrocities (*zulm*) on the daughters-in-law, one gets the same treatment from them, because they are educated, they work, they are young and so they feel they are the boss....this is what young girls today see and learn from.

Such comments reflect the tension in the relationship between the two generations and

---

22. Vijay Sadhna's film made in 1980.

are particularly revealing in as much as there is no attempt by these older women at empathising with or understanding, let alone encouraging or supporting younger daughters-in-law.

This recalls Thomas's criticism of those who consider Hindi movies as mere escapism or fantasy. In *Sau din sās ke* I could see a filmic engagement with "aspects of Indian life with which [the] audience identify" (Thomas,1986:121).

Thus it was clear from their views of this movie that the women saw themselves as victims of their daughter-in-law's rule, or aspirant rule. There were no attempts to understand why the daughters-in-law in the movie had behaved as they had, nor to remember their own personal experiences as daughters-in-law. Perhaps they were consciously, or unconsciously, recalling the indignities which they themselves had suffered earlier.

Jeffery, in her study of *pīrzādā* Muslim women in Delhi makes a similar point:

> This would imply that women have accepted the propriety of their position only within limits,and that the maintenance of *purdah* has long depended on compelling women to act in ways which they dislike. A particular feature of such a situation may well be that the adolescent straining at the leash becomes the elderly martinet insisting that her juniors behave in ways which she herself used to detest, because she is now held responsible for their deportment (1979:123).

Ross points out two more factors which are responsible for increasing the potential tension between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. Firstly, the daughter-in-law is no longer a child when she is married but a young woman who has more self-confidence, knowledge and experience and is thus much harder to dominate. Secondly, daughters-in-law now usually have more education than their mothers-in-law. They have learned new theories of child-care, house-keeping and personal behaviour. They know more about the outside world. All this challenges the mother-in-law's previous supreme position as adult adviser and source of knowledge, and tends to enhance the friction between them, particularly if they live in the same household (1961:171), and as my study found, if the age group betwen the two is smaller. Also, if the daughters-in-law are working, they can command a better status on the basis of their income, particularly where the mothers-in-law are not working or are retired or economically dependent on their sons.

James's (1974) observation, referred to earlier, that parents chose Indian girls for their sons precisely to avoid the above kind of situation, could be qualified by noting that it is not always effective.

The working status of the daughters-in-law also affects the division of labour between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law in the house. Vatuk writes,

> This is the time of life when a woman can theoretically begin to take her ease, delegate the drudgery of housework to the younger women, and luxuriate in the kinds of personal service which it is the duty of a daughter-in-law to provide. Typically she begins to establish a division of labour in which she handles the "outside" work, while her sons' wives work "inside" the home: cooking, cleaning, washing the clothes, and the like (1987:38-39).

Patricia Jeffery, Roger Jeffery and Lyon note the same division of work and domains,

> Generally, the *sas* and any unmarried *nands* (husband's sisters) do the other outside work...the *chulha* [hearth, like the keys, *chulha* is also symbolic of woman's position and authority in the house] is shared, but not necessarily equitably (1989:49).

However the reality of life in London directly contradicts the findings of Vatuk and Jeffery et al. As most daughters-in-law go out to work, most mothers-in-law are left to manage the work in the house. Women trained in the Indian tradition find it difficult to adjust to situations which invert their expectations. Most dependent elderly women have little choice and little power in these situations.

How were the Gujarati and Sikh women reacting and coping with the changes? Table 5 and 6 show that a fairly large proportion of elderly Sikh women either lived with their husbands in nuclear households, or, where widowed or separated lived singly, usually in council flats or with relatives. The single most critical factor for the women was whether they were compatible with their daughters-in-law. If not, they either asked the son and his family to move to another house, or they were turned out of their son's house. Shanti's case illustrates this point.

Shanti, a Gujarati Hindu woman, said

> To think that I was the one who had chosen that girl for my son....Anyway, when my husband died, my son called me to London to live with him and his wife [whom as I said I had chosen]....she could

> have never got a person like my son because she is not so pretty, nor was her family rich in India. I chose her because she comes from a high caste family like ours in our village, but then who was to know that she would have no bone of gratitude (*ābhār*) in her body; in fact she has wanted to throw me out of the house ever since the day I came here, though her intentions became clear to me only after a year because during that time she very cleverly worked on my son's affection towards her and so the moment she was pregnant and she knew that she had my son vulnerable (*kamzor*) towards her, she started telling him falsely about how I make her work and how I trouble her even when I know that she is pregnant, I try and control everything in the house and stop her from eating what she wants etc. etc. All this was false. My son would ask me and even though I denied, he would believe his wife and so he would warn me not to do that next time. What could I do? Even when I was not doing anything I was being blamed. This increased so much that one day my son lost his temper and scolded me and asked me to get out of the house. So I moved out of my own house and came to live with my younger son in London. That's where I live these days. This son is not married and I am very scared to marry him off for where will I go if his wife does the same to me?

Shanti's daughter-in-law behaved contrary to all her expectations of a well brought up girl in a traditional upper caste family. We might also note that in expecting "gratitude" from her daughter-in-law, Shanti was implying that she had done the girl a favour by marrying her son to someone from a lower economic and rural background. He had lived and worked abroad, had acquired a superior economic status and Shanti therefore thought that she would be able to command respect on that basis too, but her expectations failed.

However, Vimala, a Gujarati Hindu, said,

> I made sure that my daughter-in-law knew her place (*sthān*)[23] in the house and that she should give up any false hopes of ever being in control (*kabzo*) of the house while I am alive. Just a month after my daughter-in-law came to our house, I could sense that she wanted to turn me out of the house or at least be in complete control and authority (*hukūmat*) in the house....for she started making me feel not only useless but tried to show that she could do things better than me. So I had to be very smart with her. I told her instead `look, you must not concern yourself with the house, enjoy and be carefree (*mast*) for eventually once I go (die) you will have to take over all the responsibility'. And I made sure that I said this in front of my son so that he could see that I am being so nice (*ātlī sarī*) to my daughter-in-law. The fact was that I did not like or want her running my house, and making me feel useless (*bekārī*) and inferior (*nāno*) to her and perhaps later blaming me for idleness (*bekār*)

23. Meaning, subordinate to her.

> etc. So even if it meant more work at least I was in control and she knew that. Also the other good thing was that when my husband died the house was transferred to my name so if anyone had to go it would be them and not me and I made this fact known to my daughter-in-law....and so my daughter-in-law did not dare (*hargiz*) trouble (*hairān*) me.

Hence, *disengagement* (on entering the third stage of the life cycle, the retirement stage) is seen as a threat to the position and status of a woman. In other words, a woman has little choice at this stage. If she choses to disengage, which is expected in the third stage of her life, she would be isolated, possibly even turned out of her son's house. So she has to accept the reality of life in Britain which demands that she works in her son's house, possibly functioning as an *ayah* for his children, and *cowkidār* for his house. In this a woman once again becomes a victim of social expectations, contrary to all her own traditional expectations of having time to herself, being free of worries (*cintā, fikr*), and responsibilities (*dāyitva*) or burden (*bojh*), and of being served and cared for in her ageing years.

So a woman continues to be *active*, working at home, even though her bones ache. However, a distinction between physically active engagement and emotionally active engagement can be made. Although a woman may continue to be physically active she may feel emotionally disengaged, and, as Spencer has pointed out, the nature and form of involvement or integration can be different at this stage of her life. It can be constructed within the cultural framework of choice (1990:23), or as this study shows, limited choice.

Shanti's and Vimala's cases raise two important questions in the matrix of control and power in the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship. Firstly, was the mother-in-law already resident when the daughter-in-law entered the house, or did the mother-in-law enter the house as a dependent of her son. In such cases there are usually more expectations of her and she often has to compensate for her economic dependency in her son's house by doing extra work. She ends up facing the reality which goes against her expectations and causes her much pain and disappointment in her ageing years. Thus the relative position of insider and outsider is important in determining the relative control, authority and status of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.

The second question concerns the ownership of the house after the father's death. Whether the house goes to the son, or to the wife of the deceased is important in

establishing the security of the latter.

A broad comparison of the Gujarati and Sikh mothers-in-law indicates that more Sikh mothers-in-law were unable to get along with their daughters-in-law. The reasons were firstly, more Sikh daughters-in-law were educated and spoke out against the traditional attitudes of their mothers-in-law. Secondly, in most Sikh families (unlike Gujarati families), on the death of the father, the ownership of the house came to the mother and so many mothers-in-law were less tolerant towards their daughters-in-law and would ask them to leave their house. Thirdly, in some cases where women had more than one son, they hoped that the other daughters-in-law would be better and so felt they could be strict with their eldest daughter-in-law.

This suggests that most Sikh mothers-in-law had more problems in their ageing years once their sons got married. The women who were ready to make compromises usually took refuge in the gurdwaras. But some women wanted their peace, independence and complete control even if it meant staying separately and risking loneliness which they deemed preferable to the isolation, neglect and disrespect which they suffered at their son's house. And, as two Sikh (and one Gujarati woman) said, in walking out of their son's house and the tensions in relationships therein, they had saved their "dignity" (*swābhimān*).

A closer look at the Sikh community throws further light on this relationship by again showing the importance of caste distinctions in determining a daughter-in-law and mother-in-law relationship. More Jat Sikh women than Ramgardiah women found it difficult getting along with their daughters-in-law, because Ramgardiah daughters-in-law seemed more willing to conform to traditional idioms than the Jat Sikh women.

Although many Ramgardiah women were as qualified as the Jat women, at home they were less assertive than Jat women. A Ramgardiah mother-in-law still commanded a lot more respect in her own or her son's house. One of the reasons for this was that most Ramgardiah daughters-in-law joined their husbands' house as outsiders, whereas most Jat Sikh women had come to their sons' house as dependents (usually on widowhood) from India. So they were the outsiders and found it difficult to accept the pre-established authority of their daughters-in-law in their sons' house.

In all the cases reviewed so far we have only seen tensions in the relationships of mothers-in-law with their daughters-in-law. All women described so far had complained about their daughters-in-law. Many of these women themselves had had problems with their own mothers-in-law in their early years while living in joint families in India or Africa and in some cases on coming to London. Many had wished to circumvent their in-law's interference. Some had succeeded and acknowledged their separation from their mothers-in-law as having helped them improve their married life by giving them independence and privacy. Yet all these women, on themselves becoming mothers-in-law, wanted to stay with their married sons' families. This desire and anxiety was greater among widowed mothers-in-law or those who had only one son and so worried about their security on the death of their husbands (for parallels among *pīrzādā* Muslims see Jeffery,1979:123).

When this contradiction was pointed out, most women chose to ignore it. Their defence usually was that they are better mothers-in-law, or that they do not want to interfere in their sons' married life. They want only a roof over their heads and not be turned away in their ageing years. Thus mothers-in-law, even where aware very rarely empathised with their daughters-in-law.

In some extreme cases, not only was there a complete lack of empathy, but there was an element of "revenge" in putting their daughters-in-law through the same problems and conflicts which they had gone through with their mothers-in-law.

At this point we may recall Francis's argument that ongoing interaction with old parents is instructive about growing old and constitutes a form of advanced socialization (1984:147). Perhaps that is why the woman who had spent her middle-aged years with her own mother-in-law, and had learnt the roles of a mother-in-law from her, knows no other way of behaving towards the daughter-in-law. The question then is, will her daughter-in-law be a similar mother-in-law in her turn? Is this how traditions are promoted? Can we also then say that the women who did not have their older in-laws with them make better, more empathetic mothers-in-law?

My study did not support this view because in some cases the lack of empathy was quite unconscious, especially at times when women were faced with living alone in their ageing years, particularly if they also had bad health. It was on such occasions that

women took refuge in quoting the ideal traditional expectations from their *bahus* (daughters-in-law), choosing to ignore their past personal experiences of life in a western country, because those recollections worked against their sense of security in old age.

Yet, not all mother-in-law - daughter-in-law relationships were bad. There were six cases (three Gujaratis and three Sikhs) where the mothers-in-law actually praised their daughters-in-law. These women had not worked during their lives, but they had working daughters-in-law. These women were more accepting of changes in contemporary London and had moderated their expectations likewise.

The older women were impressed by their young daughter-in-law's courage (*himmat*) and strength (*tākat*) to go out and work in a foreign country. Meena, a Gujarati Hindu woman said

> My daughter-in-law works six days a week, she even has evening shifts and returns home late. She earns more than my son but never makes her husband feel inferior to her. I really respect and admire (*khūb mān che*) her. The day she has off she never rests or sits idle, she helps me with house work and the children with their school work. I of course have to do much more in my old age because with the daughter-in-law and three grand children the work at home and responsibility has increased. Because my daughter-in-law is working for economic reasons she can't help me either. So I have to do lots more work. So far it's O.K. I have managed but I am becoming old and my strength is going down. Perhaps I can manage till my granddaughter comes of age and can offer a helping hand, for as I see, my daughter-in-law will have to continue working for money at least till her sons start earning. It is only because of my daughter-in-law that our family is running so well and I have no complaints even though I have to work a lot more in my old age....that anyway is the least I can do for my son and daughter-in-law who have provided me a home and their love when I was left a complete dependent after my husband's death.

Thus, for Meena, a Gujarati Hindu woman, her increased *activity* in old age was because of a lack of choice, but it has however helped her feel loved and secure in spite of her dependency. Actually, according to Meena there was very little choice, she could either be completely free and on her own or if she wanted to stay within a family she had to sacrifice all her free-time. According to her this was a small price to pay. Other women did not always feel so charitable and expressed their resentment in private or to close friends who would keep it confidential or told total strangers (like me), for they found some therapy in the chance to articulate these matters.

Dina, a Jat Sikh woman, was also full of praise for her daughter-in-law and acknowledged the importance of her work in helping the family survive. A point to note is that almost all the women, even the ones who complained about their daughters-in-law, acknowledged quite openly the need for the daughter's-in-law to go out of the house to work. Even where some women complained that they feel left out and neglected and have to do a lot of house work because the daughters-in-law are working, still do not object to them going out to work. This is primarily because they themselves had had to work to support their families. Thus they were not only accepting of changes and realistic but empathetic towards their daughters-in-law in this regard.

But on closer examination one realised that the empathy reflected their recognition of "general necessity". For as Gyana, a Gujarati Hindu woman, said

> Times have changed; not only did I not object to my daughter-in-law working but I have also ended up doing a good share of the house work now that I am retired. I also care and feed my grandchildren when they come back from school. And what is worse is that I am expected to do all this, for if I forget something, I am told off by my daughter-in-law (*māri vahu khijāye tyāre*)...This was absolutely unthinkable in my time. I was allowed to do only a part-time job so that I could take care of my children and also do all the house work...so that is how time has changed. And also I cannot say anything or else I will probably be turned out of the house. That again was out of question in our time. But all those values, respect for elders, has gone. Now elders have to work and respect the younger people if they want a roof over their head or else in this country you can easily be made to spend the rest of your life in an Old Peoples' Home. So that is how times have changed....and so has changed the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship. Now working daughters-in-law command and old dependent mothers-in-law obey.

Dina and Gyana have thus accepted the changes fostered by the changing reality and practicality of life in Britain.

4.4. SUMMARY

Family structure and the life of Indians in London have undergone significant changes. Very broadly, the joint family structure is seen to have changed to a nuclear family structure under the influence of western culture which is believed to promote nuclear family living.

But in reality there are various types of family structure among the Indian community

based on personal choices and problems, that is, semi-joint families or living alone in own or council accommodations.

Particularly noteworthy was the fact that while most women preferred living without in-laws, ironically, they themselves in their old age expected to stay with their eldest son and his family. This was stated as the norm and moral duty of the eldest son according to the Indian tradition. This sense of moral duty often made the eldest son invite his dependent mother/parents from India to live with him and his family. This factor accounted for the large number of semi-joint families in London.

While few Indians had expressed concern and regrets about the changes in family structure, serious concern and disappointments were expressed about changes in the relationships with close family members. Family relationships were clearly seen to be influenced by their lives as immigrants in a western country.

Often their attitudes and behaviour towards their family lives and relationships are based on their expectations. Their expectations largely reflect their early socialization within their families, or what they have heard or read about the life of an ageing Indian woman "as it should be". These expectations are frequently overturned by the pressures of migration to a new culture.

The most crucial relationship which affected a woman's position at home in her family and was seen to influence all other relationships, was that with her daughters-in-law (particularly the eldest daughter-in-law she chose to stay with).

Ideally, a woman on becoming a mother-in-law was expected to wean herself from household responsibilities and retire to the prayer room, leaving the daughter-in-law in charge of the house. She, in turn, would be cared for and served by her children and particularly the daughter-in-law.

In practice, women who wanted to be cared for and served by the daughters-in-law resisted this process of withdrawal, because this would entail a loss of control in the house and an increased vulnerability to and dependency on their children and daughters-in-law.

Often, women had little choice. With the daughters-in-law going out to work, not only were the women left to do much of the house work, but the income of the daughters-in-law gave the latter authority in the house. Also, it placed the older woman in the position where she was expected to contribute her services as an *ayah* or *cowkidār* to the son's house because she was retired and supposedly free.

Thus, an elderly woman was frequently expected to take responsibility for bringing up her grandchildren. But while she may have been able to control the socialization of her children, she had very little control over her grandchildren, who were being exposed to the world of videos and western popular culture. Even in this relationship, her expectation of being close to her grandchildren and being able to pass on the traditional wisdom to them was often denied to her.

As a result, most ageing women ended up doing even more work in the house in their roles as mothers-in-law and grandmothers. In addition they were left on their own for a good part of the day when their daughters-in-law and children went out to work and school. Their husbands, after retirement, continued to give them little or no support as had always been the case. Very few changes were noted in this relationship as the women grew older. Because few women shared close relationships with their grandchildren, most were left feeling neglected and isolated in their family. This ran completely contrary to the traditional expectations of love, care and respect in old age.

However, if a woman wanted to stay with her son's family she often had no choice in the matter but to accept the reality of her changed position in the household. Some women made the decision to separate from their son's family, and chose to live alone. While many women felt that at least they had saved their self-respect and dignity in doing so, others were not so sure.

Ageing women were looking more for emotional security than anything else, whether within their families or outside it. Whether, and how, they succeed in providing themselves with the desired security will be examined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

KINSHIP AND SOCIAL NETWORKS OF AGEING GUJARATI AND SIKH WOMEN IN LONDON

5. Introduction

The previous chapters showed how the changing family roles, expectations, values and responsibilities of family members has led to various adjustment problems for the elderly women within their families, forcing many to live alone by choice or persuasion. One should not deduce from this that women who continue to live within families have been particularly integrated or happy. Most ageing women complained of feelings of disappointment because their ideals have not been met, and of feelings of marginalization, of loneliness, neglect and isolation. For many, the adjustment was a greater problem because of their failing physical health. Many women suffered from problems of blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, rheumatism, which seemed worse for many because, they said, of their "unhappy heart" (*duḥkhī man*).

Satnam and Milkit Kaur notice that "as physical health goes down, the mental urge for recreation, sympathy and acceptance grows higher. The psychological impression of old age makes the man [woman] dependent, dull and lonely, in spite of what he [she] possesses" (1987:76).

As a result, some women take refuge in the romanticization of life at home and yearn to return "home". But this is just a wish because all of them accept that they will stay in the U.K until they die. While some women have been demoralised, other women were willing to fight. They have looked for alternatives to overcome these feelings; as they grow older, more lonely and dependent, they crave companionship and happiness through their social contacts.

Francis points out that "socialization in old age depends heavily on those with whom the older person must interact. The social context of interaction is what is important, not a formal set of rights and duties" (1984:151). While this is largely true of western societies, Rosow nonetheless argues that American elderly people suffer role loss and role discontinuities when they are widowed, retired or ill because there are no definite

role expectations from them in these stages (1976:466-7).

In theory the same should not be the case with Indian women, for in Indian society the *Āśramdharma* classification lays down very definite roles and obligations for its elderly people at various stages of their life. However, a woman socialized in such ideal philosophies looses her traditional role and faces a void to be filled by a range of social contacts when she comes to live in a western society.

A void is also created by retirement from one's job and bereavement, or the departure of adult children, or migration (Jerrome,1986:182). Under these circumstances, elderly women seek support and companionship outside the home with a wider kin network, neighbours, friends and acquaintances. It is this process which this chapter will analyse. When, with whom, and how do women interact outside their family? What is the nature of these relationships and interaction? Do they provide an ageing woman with greater support and social meaning than her family in the changed circumstances of life abroad?

This chapter focuses especially on three issues: Firstly, the issue of role loss versus role enhancement. Secondly, the view that says extensive social interaction is replaced by intensive local interaction. Thirdly, the view that elderly people are socially isolated.

The Sikh and Gujarati informants in my sample chose a particular strategy of social contact to help in their ageing process and adjustments, depending upon individual personalities, philosophies, life-style and perceptions of ageing. The following table gives the social interaction pattern of ageing Gujarati and Sikh women in London. But we may note two things here. Firstly, the Table shows the interaction pattern of Gujarati and Sikh women in their older years when most of them have retired from work. Secondly, the Table only shows the actual pattern of interaction based on its frequency, which may not always correspond with the desired pattern of interaction. This is because it includes limitations, e.g. physical disability which necessitates preferred interaction with neighbours over (say) old friends who live at some distance.

TABLE 7: Main Social interaction of ageing Gujarati and Sikh women in London

Interaction with	No.of Gujarati women	No.Of Sikh women	%of Gujarati women	%of Sikh women
Neighbours (from Cty.)	15	16	25	26.67
Other Indian neighbours	9	6	15	10.00
Other neighbours	4	6	6.67	10.00
Old friends (from cty.)	10	8	16.67	13.33
Old friends (outside Cty.)	7	8	11.67	13.33
Relatives	6	11	10	18.33
Acquaintances (from Cty.)	5	3	8.33	5.00
Acquaintances (outside Cty.)	4	2	6.67	3.33
Total	60	60		

5.1. Social contacts

5.1a. Neighbours from the community

As can be seen in the above table, the highest rate of interaction in both the Gujarati and Sikh community is with neighbours from within their own community. Twenty five precent of the respondents said that they interact the most with their neighbours.

In all these cases the interaction with neighbours was based on several years of contact. Most also shared similar experiences as well as social background.

Sheela said:

> My neighbours also came from Uganda during the expulsion. We have shared a lot of similar experiences. Our children went to the same school. They also have two daughters and two sons like us. They are Gujaratis too,...yes, they are from a different caste but not much lower than us. Now all our children are married and our husbands retired. We have a lot in common. We usually have afternoon tea together and exchange family news. We have always gone shopping together. I don't even miss my daughters as much now that they are married because I have Kamla [the neighbour]. Even at home if my daughter-in-law goes to her parent's house for a day or even a month I don't miss her but I really miss Kamla whenever she goes to visit her daughter in Leicester. This is how much my neighbour, who is also perhaps my closest friend, means to me.

In another case, Vimala actually called her neighbour *moṭi bahan* (Gujarati term for elder sister). She said:

> My neighbour has done more for me than any of my relations or even my actual elder sister has ever done for me or my family. I met my neighbour twenty-five years ago when we came here from Kenya while shopping in the Wembley market. I was asking the owner of the a store if she knew of anybody wanting to let a two room flat in the area. At the time I was living with my husband and three children in a one room flat. When I was talking to her I think I had tears in my eyes. My neighbour whom I call *moṭi bahan* saw me and came up to me. She asked me about my problem and instantly offered to move me into her house till I find a better place. She offered me the use of two rooms and to share her kitchen. And she said I could pay what I was paying for the one room flat. I couldn't believe her but it was too good an offer to refuse. So I accepted and we [my family] moved into her house. I can't even begin to tell you all that she did for us from that day on. Because I was short of money she helped me get a job in a shop which was owned by her distant relative. She used to take care of my children along with hers when they

returned from school because I returned from work only at 4:30 in the evening. She found us a lovely house just five houses away from hers. And even when we moved she would get my children from school and feed them and she refused to take money for that. All the years when I was working I used to meet her when I used to go to pick up my children. But even when the children grew up, I would still go and meet her and have the usual cup of tea with her after work. And now that I have left my job, I usually meet her in the afternoon. I have always told her my day-to-day problems, worries, hardships, and she, like a true sister has provided a supportive shoulder (*sath apyo*) for me. She has hardly ever talked about her problems. But usually I have to sense it and try and do whatever I can. She only knows how to give and if she has to take, she makes sure that she gives more. With her around I have never felt lonely. I don't mind not having any other relative around in London because I have my neighbour who means more to me than any of my relatives or friends. Yes, she is also a Gujarati...she is from a higher caste to me but that has never been important to us...She is only four years older to me but behaves as if she was twenty years older. But even at this age I do feel like a little girl with her. I feel so safe (*surakśit*) and happy (*kẖush*) with her. My husband died five years ago and the way she cared for me then! I miss my husband but I don't feel lonely. She was the one who found both the boys for my daughters' marriages. And she did more work at all my children's weddings than I myself or any of my relatives....These days whenever I go to the doctors for my sugar test, she always comes with me. I am so lucky (*kẖuśnasīb*) to have her. I only wish I would die before her. I am more scared (*ghabrāvu chu*) of being left alone by her than I was ever when my husband died or my daughters got married and left home.

When I spoke to her neighbour, the neighbour also said that for her Vimala would always be like a younger sister, in fact as close as a daughter, because she cares for her as she cares for her own children.

The day I visited Vimala's neighbour's house she had prepared Vimala's favourite vegetable which nobody in her own family liked. According to Vimala this is how thoughtful and caring her neighbour was.

In this case normal interaction was translated into a close relationship which initially filled the absence of relatives in a foreign country, and in old age filled the void created by the loss of husband, and the marriage of children.

However, women did not always respond to neighbours in this emotional way. At times they became friends because of pragmatic reasons.

Narinder, a Jat Sikh woman who had come to live with her son's family only two years

ago, said that her reason for interacting with a Sikh neighbour was because of the language problem. She said,

> I would like to be able to make friends with my neighbours but on one side of our house is a Gujarati family. I really like that woman and I have tried to talk to her but the problem is I speak only Punjabi and she speaks only Gujarati so it's useless. And my neighbour on the other side is Greek and so it's completely useless to even try. I can't talk to either of my neighbours so I have to walk about fifteen houses away and go and meet this Sikh woman who has also come from India quite recently. She is my only companion. With her I go to the gurdwara at times.

5.1b. Other Indian neighbours

Some Gujarati and Sikh women mentioned that they interact with neighbours who are not from their own community.

The reasons here were simple and straight-forward. Firstly, the other Indian neighbours had been more help to them than any of their Gujarati relatives or friends in times of need, and so they were happy about knowing them and sharing caring relationships. Secondly, it was simply useful to know one's neighbours irrespective of which community they belonged to, as long as they were not completely different, or at least were Indians and understood the language and culture.

Divyani, a Gujarati Hindu woman, said:

> It is very important to keep good relations with neighbours. I do have relatives but they all are in Leicester. If there is ever an emergency then at that time one can neither go to relatives for help nor can they come to you quickly. At such times only neighbours can help. So I particularly cared about having good relations with my neighbours. I have always done as much as I can for my neighbours. I make sure that like any good friend I call them for all the functions at home. It is only after having lived next to each other for fifteen years that we have got to know each other quite well. Now we both are retired [both of us worked] and both of us have daughters-in-law at home yet we spend an hour or so in each other's company every day and also do the daily shopping together. My neighbour's daughter-in-law is not a nice person. My neighbour has to do a lot of work at home so I usually help her with cooking by cutting the vegetables etc...Today, my neighbour knows more about me and my family than any of my relatives or friends because she sees me and my family everyday and we also talk about personal lives to each other.

Preeti, a Sikh woman said the same thing about her relationship with her Indian

neighbour. She said,

> I have a good relationship with my neighbour because that is the way I wanted it to be. It is only a neighbour who can help you at any point of the day. And because a neighbour is not a relative or a family member she does not have any expectations from you. You can maintain an equal relation with her. You can tell her everything and relieve your heart but with relations you have to be careful about what you tell and to whom...My neighbour is a particularly nice person and I depend upon our relationship quite a lot specially as these days my daughter-in-law troubles me quite a lot and so I can talk about my problems to my neighbour whose daughter-in-law is also quite nasty....But I tell you something, all these social contacts with neighbours or friends does not mean much if you are not happy with your own family. You can keep busy for one or two hours with your neighbour everyday but they can't remove your real loneliness which you suffer at home.

Relationships with neighbours even if they are from another community are seen as a useful support to have, particularly in old age when women are alone at home for a large part of the day. There is a need for somebody dependable in emergencies as well as someone who offers a listening ear and a supportive shoulder. This lessens the need to go a greater distance to other relatives who are not as familiar with their problems.

Social contacts with neighbours may only fill a temporary need for companionship and are not successful in overcoming the deeper problem of emotional isolation and loneliness, unless, as we saw in Vimala's case, interaction with the neighbour is translated into a meaningful fictive blood relationship which compensates for the void created by the loss and absence of actual family members.

5.1c. Other neighbours

While women were quite vociferous in expressing the advantages of relationships with neighbours, it was limited explicitly to the neighbours from their own community and, occasionally women from other Indian communities. Women who had listed interaction with neighbours from other communities as their most frequent source of interaction outside their own immediate family stated quite clearly that it was because they had no choice. The reason in all these cases was their bad health, or partial or near complete immobility, which necessitated a very limited range of interaction in avoiding total isolation and boredom. Fortunately, these women could speak English, which was the common language of communication with neighbours from other communities besides Indians.

Beena was nearly blind as a result of a recurring cataract problem. She could not travel and so often sat in her shaded garden where she was usually joined by her Jewish neighbour for a cup of tea in the afternoon. She said:

> I value my talks with my neighbour very much. I have learnt so much about her culture from her. She says she likes Indians and Indian food and our habits. I think Jewish people are very nice too....but you know it's not the same....I can talk about India to her and she can talk about Jewish people but I can't confide in her. I will have to explain a lot of things to her. She is not familiar with our culture, our life-style etc. So we can't ever be close friends.

Maya, a Gujarati woman and Sudha, a Sikh woman, on the other hand, have chronic arthritis as have their English and Greek neighbours. When they discovered their shared complaints they became good friends. They meet everyday, or every other day in the case of Maya and her English neighbour, for tea in the afternoon. They talk about culture and family and have begun appreciating each other's backgrounds. Like Beena, they also find their relationship with their neighbours limiting - because of cultural differences. As Maya said:

> You think I can tell my English neighbour about our way of life in our village in Gujarat, she would not understand the fun we had living in joint families. We are just very different. Our cultures are too different.

Maybe Maya's English neighbour would understand, but Maya had formed her opinion and had decided to limit her friendship and interaction with her English neighbour. These relationships and the factors which inhibit them will be discussed further in the next chapter.

5.1d. Old friends

Next to neighbours, the group with whom the ageing women interacted the most were their old friends. Old friends (*jūnī bahan pāṇī* - in Gujarati and *purānī saheli* - in Punjabi) were lexically mentioned and distinguished from new friends. When they referred to a serious friendship over a long time, and, most importantly, to the women whom they had known in India or Africa, they would classify this relationship as an "old friendship". Old friends were particularly useful relationships for elderly people because as Jerrome says, "old friends, with a long shared past, provide continuity"

(1986:190). Also, in old friendships there is no need to establish intimacy and there is little fear of competition and rivalries which may threaten new friendships (1986:193). These past shared experiences distinguished old friends from neighbours who were often seen as just good friends.

Also significant was that informants referred to their old friends by their first name. In India, both Sikhs and Gujaratis would refer to somebody by name only if that person was younger than them, or the same age as them, or where they were treated as equals. In this case, women used their friend's first name to signify the equality and lack of formality in this relationship, while their children referred to them as *Māsī* (a term used in both Gujarati and Punjabi for mother's sister).

This was particularly significant because in all other relationships the children referred to neighbours or acquaintances as "aunty" or "aunty *jī*" (*jī* being a suffix used as a mark of respect in both Gujarati and Punjabi). Sometimes their name would be followed by aunty, e.g Kamla aunty, to specify which woman was being referred to. "Aunty" is a common word used often to signify respect for a person because using just the name of an elder person is considered rude and disrespectful. Many Punjabi woman used the word *bahanjī* (*bahan* means sister) and Gujarati women would refer to them by their name followed by "ben" (sister). In both the cases the use of the word sister does not mean real sister and is used more out of politeness.

Thus old friends were distinguished from other social relations through using specific kinship terms which signified their place in the family and indicated the respect due to them.

5.1di. Old friends from the same community

Women who had old friends from their own community shared with these friends more than their past contact in India or Africa. A knowledge of their friend's background revealed similarities in caste and social status as well. Unlike with neighbours, in good friendships, regular interaction is not always necessary and these women did not meet their friends very frequently. In fact they complained that because of their age, or physical problems or expenses of travel (friends did not always live very close by), they found it difficult to meet frequently. Usually, however, they would meet once or twice

a month.

Pratibha, a Gujarati woman, said:

> I just met my friend yesterday and now I am planning and looking forward to when I am going to meet her next. It's quite fun (*majā āve che*) this way. The thought of meeting her next time keeps me busy. I always cook and take something for her. So I spend a lot of time thinking and planning and buying what I want to cook. The 25th of this month is her grandson's birthday and I know he likes chocolate cake and so now I am planning to get hold of a chocolate cake recipe which my nephew's wife makes and do that for the next time I go for her grandson's birthday....I talk to her every alternate day, she calls me once and I call her next. We usually call each other at 1:00 each afternoon when calls are not so expensive but that is a good time because our children are away on jobs and we are retired and alone at home. I enjoy this routine. It's something to look forward to ...Otherwise my life has nothing. My own children do not care much for me. They only keep me in their house because I am their mother and it will hurt their reputation if they did not even let me stay in my own house. But that is all. So my friend means a lot to me. She is my only source of happiness in this age; with her I can relax and tell her everything. She does the same with me. She is quite happy in her family. She has a wonderful life at home, everybody cares for her. They are not at all like my family. Actually with her being here and having a family, I feel in a way that they are my family too. That is why I do all these things for her grandson. He feels like my own.

Pratibha's comments do not quite conform to the manner in which Jerrome assesses the relationship between old friends. According to Jerrome, "whether or not old friends assist in the adjustment to old age and acceptance of ageing depends on whether the attitudes towards the ageing process are shared" (1986:190). But as has been seen, it is not always necessary to share an attitude with one's friend. Often old friends can influence each other if, for example, as in Pratibha's case, a friend is having problems in her ageing years; she can be helped to adjust to them in a better way.

Anju, a Sikh woman, meets her friend only twice a month and does not talk very often to her because of the expense of telephone calls. She does not interact much with her neighbours or even go out of the house. She says she has nice neighbours but as she says,

> With friends you can tell them everything. They will keep your secrets, but with neighbours you can't tell them everything because they will gossip and then everyone will know all about your life and your problems. I don't want that to happen, so I keep to myself and when I meet my friend I tell her everything ...I only wish I could meet her or talk to her more often so I won't be so lonely everyday. Anyway, I am

grateful for even this.

I went along to some of the meetings of "old friends" and what I heard and saw told me more about the nature and significance of this relationship than my interviews with the women individually.

The talks with old friends were usually in three stages. First, little was wasted on pleasantries. Conversations usually began with an inquiry about a particular problem or particular person which concerned both the friends. It was not just that information was shared, but opinions were expressed and judgements passed. All this would be done while sharing a cup of tea.

The second stage of conversation would usually be reached over a meal and would be of a more personal nature where personal ailments and problems would be discussed. Meals would often be interrupted with crying and sympathy from the friend, or the friend suggesting ways of coping with personal anguish.

The third stage of the conversation would be over another cup of tea after the meal and before the friend took her leave. This conversation would be more general and memories about the past would be shared and friends would gossip about others and giggle like two young school girls sharing a private joke. In those moments, friends forgot all their present worries. In this way meetings usually ended on a happy note.

If I travelled back with one of the friends after these meetings, the stories about their past would be continued and the woman would fill in the gaps in my knowledge about incidents or persons she had discussed with their friend.

I could see how significant and meaningful such friendships were for ageing women. The women were completely at ease and carefree with their friends. There was no holding back information, feelings, opinions and suggestions. While it was important to tell friends about problems, their opinions were equally important and their advice was followed. When asked the reason for this, the answers were typically, "my friend knows me" or "she understands me", or "she knows all about my past so she understands me better", or "she has gone through the same so she can relate to my problems". In fact friends, because they were women, because they were usually from the same background, and because they also shared fairly similar experiences, were considered

more important than even husbands and children when it came to following advice.

Sharing the past with old friends may be seen as a form of reminiscence. Like reminiscence it involved recalling happy memories (Lieberman and Tobin,1983) of "good old days" but also might critically evaluate these past experiences and present situations in the form of "life-review" (Lewis,1971; Lieberman and Tobin,1983). Often advice was offered concerning the ways to overcome a particular problem or situation in their life. Often the advice would also include adoption of a particular attitude as a way of combatting their problems i.e "ignore it" or "tolerate it" or "resist it" or "articulate your grievances", etc.

In fact, identification with friends was so close that in many cases if a friend was going through problems, it reflected on the informants' mood and family life too, e.g. often the informants would say "my son could also do this to me because after all my friend's son did this to her". And, from that day her relationship with her son would be affected. Once again, contrary to Jerrome's understanding (1986:190), old friends can and often do influence individuals' attitudes to ageing.

In fact, my observations suggests that they seem to influence and affect a woman's ageing process more than whether the woman experienced advanced socialization through ongoing interaction with older parents, which Francis (1984:147) claimed was important for adjustment to one's own ageing (Chapter II has shown the limitation of this analysis in terms of the settlement pattern of Indians in London).

5.1dii. Old friends from outside the community

"Friendship knows no distinction", said Prabha, a Gujarati woman. According to Prabha,

> My friend Deepa is a Maharashtrian. Deepa's and my family were neighbours in Ahmedabad. I have known Deepa from then. We went to the same school and got married the same year and then somehow both of us came to London because of our children. It does not matter to me that Deepa is a Maharashtrian. We both know everything about each other. We were always together and even when we were not we kept in touch through letters because Deepa was in America for ten years before coming here. Now we meet whenever we can but we talk almost everyday on the phone. It's so nice to have an old and close friend with whom you can talk about your past and present so openly.

Bhawana, another Gujarati woman, actually cherishes the difference in religion between her and her Sikh friend. In fact it is precisely that difference which brought her closer to her Sikh friend, Gurpreet. Bhawana said:

> I used to work in the same factory as Gurpreet and though I used to see her everyday and usually exchange *namaste* we never really talked to each other. I used to talk to and spend my time with four other Gujarati workers who I thought were my friends and Gurpreet would spend her time with her four Sikh friends at work. But it was when I started having problems with my boss who had started harassing me and finding faults with my work [later I realised it was because he wanted to give my job to some other girl he knew] that one day when he did that, Gurpreet walked up to him and threatened to report his harassment to the authorities if he continued hassling me for what was not my fault. I was quite shaken by that incident so Gurpreet took me home that day and told me to speak out in future if he harassed me further or to call her if things went really bad. At that point I was actually thinking of leaving the job but Gurpreet's support gave me courage to fight against the injustice and for what was evidently my right. From that day on Gurpreet became very protective of me and I knew that her other Sikh friends did not like what she was doing for me but she did it. I respect her so much. It was then that we became such good friends. We started visiting each other's houses and started taking part in each other's happy and sad occasions. After twenty years of friendship I hardly ever feel that she is somebody from a completely different religion. If anything, I love her religion and the way the *Gurus* preach about equality between men and women. I go for all the *Śabad Kīrtans* and all the celebrations. Our children are also the best of friends. I think we are much better people after knowing her family. We have learnt a lot from her e.g: how to stand up for our rights. Now that both of us are retired, we still meet and call each other. In fact yesterday, my grand-daughter who is only seven months old had a stomach problem, so I called her up and she suggested a remedy and it worked. So how can it matter if she is a Sikh?

Ironically, most Sikh women gave their religious beliefs as reasons for forming and defending their friendship with women from other communities.

Surinder said,

> Our religion tells us that we are all one (*ek*) meaning we are all alike. Our religion does not believe in discrimination (*bhed-bhāv*) so how can I discriminate [on the grounds] that she is a Sikh or she is not a Sikh so she is different? That is why when I met Lalita [Gujarati] in the post-office where I worked in Kenya, we became friends. She came to London before me but then we communicated through letters and when I came here too, she not only had found a house for me but also helped me find a job. She told me all about which school I could send my children to, etc. She just made my life so comfortable. And she has cared

> so much for me ever since my husband died last year. She comes and meets me everyday because I suffer from very bad rheumatism. And [on days when] she can't come she sends her daughter to see me. It is not enough for her to talk to me on the phone, she or her daughter must see that I am fine. She has done more for me than any of my Sikh friends would have done.

An important point should be noted here. All the Sikh women who mentioned having friends from other communities were the ones who had come from Africa, and a good number of them (five out of eight) were from the Ramgardiah caste. In previous chapters we have seen that Ramgardiahs adhere more closely to the Sikh religion (in principles and daily practice) and also that most of the Sikhs in Africa were from this caste. They were more accustomed to interacting with people of different cultures than the Jats who came from predominantly Sikh villages in Punjab and therefore had less chances of having friends from other Indian communities.

The relationship with friends, and the readiness to travel long distances to meet friends who provide a more meaningful relationship than even close family members in old age disproves the hypothesis that "extensive social interaction is replaced by intensive local interaction" (Shanas and Townsend,1968:5). Admittedly, ageing brings problems of mobility, but if it can be shown that there is an increasing local interaction, we must also take into account the exigencies of the situation.

5.1e. Extra-domestic Relatives

The women who interacted more frequently with their non-domestic relatives among both Sikh and Gujarati families were the ones who had been helped by these relatives in times of need, either emotionally, morally or materially.

Thus it had become almost obligatory to regard these relationships with relatives outside the household as the closest and most meaningful of social relationships. Often it was these relatives who had provided them a home and shelter when their closest relatives (e.g husband or children) had turned them out of the house. This relationship had very little element of choice. The informants went to their relatives for support because it was offered as part of a family responsibility.

Karanjeet, a Sikh woman, remembers how when her husband had become a violent

drunkard, her husband's brother had helped her and her family. He had helped Karanjeet find a job, kept the children in his house because she did not want to leave her husband and helped with getting medical assistance for her husband. He continued to support them emotionally and materially after her husband died. She said:

> It is at such times [that] if a relative can help you, your life becomes easier. With friends and neighbours you can never feel this close. You feel as if you are impinging (*dakhal*) on them and taking too much from them. Whereas although my brother-in-law has done so much for us, he never allowed us to feel this way. He took the responsibility as the brother of my husband. So it was like helping your own blood relative. Ever since my husband died he never allowed my children to feel like they were without a father. He and his wife even gave away my daughter in marriage[24] as if she was their own. Now that is something which even a close friend could never have done. I also know that if ever I was to leave my home or if my son's wife turns me out of the house I will have a home to go to. That is the way I feel with my brother-in-law's family being here with me and always having cared (*khyāl*) and supported (*sahārā*) us.

Malti, a Gujarati woman, expressed similar sentiments for her brother's family. She said:

> When my only son and his family turned me out of our house, where was I to go? I have some friends from my community but I could not go and become a burden (*bojh*) on them but I did not hesitate to call my brother and ask him if he could keep me. And without hesitation or further question, he took me to his house. I am sure my friends would have kept me for a few days but I would feel a real burden and an outsider but with my brother's family, though I may be a burden, I am not an outsider. I know the family. My brother is my blood and his children are like my own children. I feel very close to him...but still it's not my home, I am grateful living with my brother's family but I am not happy, because after one is married and has one's own family, that is what matters more. So it hurts to know that your own children - whom you had borne and brought up with so much love and care have turned you out of their house, especially in your old age when you need their love and support more.

Two Sikh women invoked the morality of kinship when they explained why they interacted with their extra-domestic relatives more than friends and neighbours.

---

24. Usually in Hindu weddings it is customary for the father along with his wife (if he has a wife) to give away his daughter (*Kanyā daan* - gift of virgin daughter) in marriage. If he does not have a wife then usually his elder brother or a younger brother with their wife will together give away his daughter.

Parminder said:

> ....because I have my relatives here I first turn to them when I need any help or support or even companionship. In fact it's a test of relationships. Only if I am turned away by my relatives will I turn to my friends and then my neighbours. If relatives cannot help you and provide you simple companionship, what is the point of having them? They will then be no different than any other friend or neighbour.

Harpreet voiced similar sentiments,

> In our village if one had to turn to other persons in the community besides one's relatives, the relatives would be accused (*burā-bhalā*) and cursed (*dutkār*). They would be so ashamed (*śarmindā*). I was brought up under that tradition and really all my generation was brought up under that tradition. We have tried to bring up our children like that. So, of course, given that many of our relations are here, we would naturally turn to them first if we need any help or even otherwise for normal daily companionship. Only if they are very far would we pass our time with others like friends from our community or neighbours but we can never be as close to them as to our relatives.

Thus, quite noticeably, the informants who emphasised the importance of relatives over friends spoke about the feeling of family and closeness in their interaction with relatives. These women were in all cases helped out in crises by these relatives.

Women recognized that relatives are the active partners in this relationship. However, as many women said, the sense of being a burden diminished if they were relying on relatives for help and support. Blood relations had some feeling of partial responsibility for caring for kinfolk who were suffering or needed help. Yet although relatives provide a deeper social relationship for some women, there may still remain feelings of hurt or of not being completely at home because their closeness with these relatives was the product of a deeper sense of rejection by the members of their own household.

5.1f. Acquaintances from the community and outside it

The women who relied on acquaintances (*pahcān*) for social contacts were the ones who had no other choice or very limited choice. The first group of women who relied on acquaintances from either within the community or outside it, were the ones who had recently arrived in London from India (or elsewhere), usually to live with their sons and their family, and who did not have old friends or other relatives living here. Women

who depended upon acquaintances from within their own community were typically aged and or those who could only speak Gujarati or Punjabi.

Often, acquaintanceships of a closer nature were formed in various caste and religious associations among the Gujaratis. Some women were fairly regular visitors to these associations, e.g Swaminarayan, Svadhyaya, Leva Patel Association, etc. These associations are of a local nature, i.e situated in the heart of the community and used by members of a particular caste or religious group.

Though my research did not go into this question, I observed one major difference between such associations and the Asian organizations where I did my fieldwork. While the Associations represented the community's and castes' political and religious interests, which Dwyer has drawn attention to (1994:23), they were not equipped to deal with an individual's personal socio-psychological problems, which the organizations with their trained staff and access to social services were. It may be worth comparing the role of the associations and organizations in respect to their services for the community or particular age and gender groups in future research.

The other set of women who relied on acquaintances from either their own community or from outside it were working women. Since they spent most of the time at work, they largely relied on interaction with fellow employees who might in certain cases become their friends.

For the non-working women, or the ones who had retired, acquaintances were generally made in places like the Brent Indian Association, where most of these women came on a fairly regular basis for *satsaṅg* or to watch videos, or for the luncheon club or just to socialize.

However the interaction of informants in these organizations revealed an important feature of the relationships formed there. Each woman who came to the organization on a regular or even occasional basis for special lectures or Bring-a-Dish Day at the Asian Women's Forum, or for *satsaṅg* at the Brent Indian Association had made either one specific friend or a very small group of acquaintances from amongst the women who came there. Therefore pairs or groups of women usually sat together. They would rarely interact with other women present in the same room at the organization. The basis of

this association, in order of importance, was firstly, belonging to the same community; then, there was a preference for similarity of caste, followed by regional identification - whether people came from India or Africa; finally, what cemented their association was usually a similarity of experiences. This prioritisation of factors in forming associations in these organizations is an important indicator of their relative importance in the lives of the informants and reflects what Kanitkar calls as "consciousness of kind" (1972:382).

However the organizations also played an important part in enriching the lives of its members by the outings and picnics it organized for them. For many of the elderly Indian women these outings were their first step outside London or even their own locality in north or south London. Women joined these outings in large numbers and were very happy on such occasions. Indian women who spend most of their lives looking after their families and doing house work, even in old age, have little free time. Such outings are seen as treats and are rare examples of "leisure", as they term it.

Acquaintances were made in places like the temple or gurdwara where most women went regularly at a fixed time in the day. Norman points out that "some of the religious institutions recognized that their organizations were providing a social as well as a religious centre for some of the elderly within the community" (1985:34).

However, the relationships formed at both the organizations and places of religious worship were more for companionship and sociability rather than for any real support or assistance. This was because the relationships had insufficient time to develop, and the women were in fairly advanced years themselves, and so unable to provide any real physical support to each other besides mere companionship. This was important in itself and did partially help to relieve loneliness, and, in sharing similar life experiences, proved mutually comforting.

Baljeet, a Sikh woman, made the point this way:

> What assistance (*sahārā*) do I need? I only need companionship (*sāth*). I come to the *gurdwara* and *Guru* is here to take care of me and I do have my sons who will take care of me if there is something major but it is the companionship which I lack at home because both my sons and their wives are working and I am left all alone at home. From 8 in the morning to 4 in the evening when my grandsons return from school, I don't have much to do and I can't talk to anybody. I came here from my village

> where we had a joint family [my husband's family] but since both my sons were here, I came here when my husband died. So I feel very lonely if I do not see anybody or talk to anybody. I am not used to being all alone. So I come here to the gurdwara because I meet all these women here. Also I only speak Punjabi so I can't talk to many women in my area [Ealing] who are mostly Gujaratis or from other nationalities.

While Baljeet was happy with the companionship provided by the women at the gurdwara, Devender, another Sikh woman, was not so happy. She said:

> I am grateful that I do get to talk to so many Sikh women at this organization, but then I have to make efforts to come here everyday if I need companionship, so it's not very satisfying in this sense. What is a few hours of talk; you still have to return to a lonely home? You are still rejected by your family in your old age. If I didn't come here I would go mad. So it is survival we are talking about, not real happiness in the social relationships that we form outside our immediate family.

Devender has highlighted an important point about the nature and role of social contacts, the personal efforts that some women have to make if they wish to communicate with people, and the brevity and temporary effect of such contacts. Patel, a social worker with *Age Concern* in Brent who has written about social services for black elders, makes the following comment.

> Although going out daily may result in contacts with relatives, friends, state agency staff or visits to shops, there is no qualitative measure of social contact itself...so frequency of trips and encounters with different individuals, albeit important, are equated with the differential nature of social encounters - exchanging a hello with a friend is on par with a conversation with another! What is, however, significant are the number of black elders who have no daily contact with friends, relatives or `caring' staff....thus, a significamt number of elders are socially isolated (1990,24).

Bhatti (1976) makes a similar assertion. However none of the women in my sample complained of complete social isolation (which of course, does not necessarily equate with emotional isolation) even if the only thing that kept this in abeyance was a companionship with a neighbour, a relative, a friend or simply an acquaintance.

5.2. Other Strategies for adjustment

Besides social contacts, a woman also relied on other strategies to adjust to her ageing process. The three most common ones were: religious worship and activities, the media, and reminiscence.

5.2a. Religious activities

A number of informants in my sample, both Gujaratis and Sikhs, spent a fair amount of time in religious worship or other activities related to religion.

While almost all the women informants said that they prayed at home regularly everyday, some actually made it a daily routine to go to the mandir (temple) and gurdwara. According to the *Āśramdharma* classification, a woman in her third stage is expected to wean herself away from all emotional bonds with family and channel her energies to the service of God. All the informants were familiar with this concept and some quoted it quite often.

Kanta, a Gujarati woman, said,

> I wish I could take *sanyās* or go for a pilgrimage to India but then it is easier said than done. It is not easy to leave one's family or to cut oneself off completely from this world. But now that I am retired, I do try and spend more time on my daily *pūjā* [worship] and also go to the mandir as and when I can. It gives me a great sense of happiness and contentment. I feel at peace there. Unfortunately I can't spend too much time there as I have to come back home and do the housework as my daughter-in-law is working and my grandchildren are very young.

Kanta lived with her son's family. Balbir, a Jat Sikh woman, was living alone and so had no visible family obligations. Balbir said,

> Yes I pray at home everyday and I also go to the gurdwara everyday. What else to do? I don't have much work at home so I devote all my time to my Guru. It is better than sitting aimlessly at home and moaning about one's loneliness. Going to the gurdwara and praying everyday gives me a lot of peace and courage to face my loneliness. I feel Guru is with me and he will take care of me.

The point here is to show that, whether women devoted time to religious activity by choice or not, they did consider it important to pray and this was recognized as something which was prescribed for ageing women in the Hindu scriptures. But it was not enough to pray at home because that was done even when one was very busy and had family responsibilities. In one's old age, therefore, a great stress was placed on praying in the temple or gurdwara.

In both temples and gurdwaras, tha act of praying was a very satisfying and fulfilling experience for an elderly woman. If she was particularly lonely or sad it gave her a sense of oneness and a feeling of belonging to and being taken care of by God. This personal relationship with God gave many women courage to face their ageing process, whether they had company at home or not. They also felt closer to their traditions which for many was a source of emotional security in old age.

This deeper and wider sense of satisfaction and security provided by visits to the temples is marked in ageing populations. Other general studies of castes such as that by Michaelson have tended to depict the temple as peripheral:

> The Lohanas, like other Gujarati castes are engaged in an intensive weekly round of religious activities, but in the Lohana case these activities are organized by family and kin, the local caste associations, and the various devotional congregations (*satsang*) in the neighbourhood. Formal temple attendence is sporadic, with some caste members never going at all, even though they might consider themselves to be `very religious' (1983:32).

My own study shows that while many elderly women attended various religious congregations organized by their caste associations or the Asian organizations, like the *satsaṅg* on Mondays and Saturdays at the Brent Indian Association, they still preferred to go to the temples as and when they could because, as several women said, "it is more satisfying (*saṅtoṣ*)" or "I feel safe (*surakṣit*) there".

This does not discount the fact that Gujarati Hindus followed various types of religious orientations or sects often centred on a specific religious founder, e.g, Swaminarayans (Barot,1972,1981,1987; Tambs-Lyche,1974; Dwyer,1994), or Pushtimargis (Vertovec,1991; Dwyer,1994).

In light of this, Ballard and Ballard's finding of more frequent gurdwara attendance in the U.K compared to Punjab (1977:37) reflects the social reality of life in the U.K for many Sikhs. My study has focused on the elderly Sikh women who seek religion as also a way of escaping "loneliness" and insecurity rather than religion for religion's sake alone.

This sense of "safety and security" provided by temples and religious worship reflects a symptom of the ageing excperiences of women in London. One possible explanation

could be what Barot writes, "For a group which is defined as being both different and inferior and denied opportunities to assume identity and status relevant to the main stream of the metropolitan society, self-conception and self-esteem may increasingly focus on religious belief and practices and its reconstruction in a less friendly and even an `alien milieu'" (1993:8).

Many women also used religion to find answers to or meaning in many of their experiences of life (Leech,1977; Bergin,1983; Coleman,1990). Koenig (1992, 1993) has pointed out that older people turn to religion also because religious thinking constitutes one of the most prominent and successful ways older people control their emotional responses in difficult situations or as my study found, even to explain to themselves the meaning of some of their traumatic and distressing experiences in life. This fact was reinforced for me when I attended a conference on world spirituality, *Sambhav* organized by the Madhwanis (a rich Gujarati industrialist family from Kenya) in Wembley, north-west London. I was taken there by a group of my informants and the main aim of the conference was to bring together all religions of the world and discuss similarities in each religion.

This conference was attended by thousands of Indians from different communities in London. Many also came from other cities in the U.K, particularly Leicester, Bradford, Birmingham and Glasgow, which have large Indian populations. Both men and women of all ages attended this conference.

At this point one may well agree with Dwyer who, writing of aspects of religiosity among east African Gujaratis and direct migrants from Gujarat finds that,

> ...although most east African Gujaratis have rapidly achieved at least a moderate deree of prosperity since arriving in Britain....religiously they tend towards a village-like conservatism, even if they have never been to India....Members of both groups [Vallabhacharayas and Swaminarayans] have similar, often identical, regional, caste and sectarian origins in Gujarat, and it is these specificities, rather than the contingencies of residence at one point or another in the diaspora, that are the principal foundation of their most important social networks (1994:18).

At this conference the main speaker was Morari Bapu, born in Talagajarda village, near Mahua in Gujarat. He is addressed as *Pūjya Saṅt* (worshipped saint) and is followed by

many like a God. Morari Bapu's wide appeal (especially among Gujaratis) lies in his ability to speak about religion in ordinary language and important messages drawn from all religions. Shri Morari Bapu is a leading exponent of *Rām-Kathā* (narrative elaboration of *Ramayana*). He believes that by listening to Ram Katha repeatedly, people will completely absorb the message of this epic and that this will ultimately lead to the universal awakening of mankind.

His aim in life, he states, is to re-establish the values prevalent during the *Rām-rājya* (rule of Ram). He constantly strives to arouse faith and confidence in the ideals of Lord Rama and to get people to relate the special attributes of the various characters in the *Ramayana* to their own day-to-day life.

In England, Morari Bapu particularly stresses upon the migrants the need to be close to one's ones culture. And, in having Pujya Morari Bapu re-affirm their (Older women's) faith in Indian ideals, their belief and conviction in enforcing such ideals in their daily life in a western country gets strengthened further - but it is not easy to live the ideals and values of the mythological past in the twentieth century.

Listening to Morari Bapu

A stall at SAMBHAV

Enjoying ice-cream after the *Kathā*

Kathā attenders at Bus Stop

5.2b. Media

Besides their involvement in religious activities, many women found a measure of happiness in some of the activities at the organizations where I did my field-work. The single most popular activity was the video club for women. Many women were almost movie addicts. On closer observation and through talks with them, I discovered that these women were primarily lonely women or troubled women, and saw movies as a way of escaping their loneliness and troubles through the entertainment provided by the films. Elderly women would also often want to see mythological films, like *Jai Saṅtośī Māṅ*, which is shown twice a year or more at the Asian Women's Forum and once or twice at Milap. These films were described by women as "good films". It helps them feel "peaceful" (śāntī), happy (kẖush), satisfied (saṅtoṣ) or as a woman said, "it is good to be close to religion (dharma) and to remember God".

But more often, women used movies, like religion, to answer some of the social dilemmas they had or were facing. For example, films which depicted the tensions in family relationships, ("family dramas" as they were called) were very popular with women who had problematic family lives, or films which dealt with inter-community marriages helped women to understand why their children had married out of their caste or community. They no longer felt alone in having this social problem.

A similar closeness of the themes of Hindi films and the everyday concerns of the audience is argued by Thomas in her analysis of "narratives whose power and insistence derives from their very familiarity, coupled with the fact that they are deeply rooted (in the psyche and in traditional mythology)" (1986:130).

Women who could not go out of the house for various reasons, usually because of physical illnesses, or if they had a lot of work to do at home, said that their constant companion was the "Sunrise" Asian channel on the radio. It offers 24-hour service. It starts its morning programme with devotional songs and *śabad* (recitation from *Guru Granth Sāhib* - religious books of Sikhs). It primarily plays songs from Hindi movies but a few hours are allocated for Gujarati, Punjabi, Bengali and more recently, Tamil songs. It also has news bulletins every hour in Hindi and English and once during the day in the regional languages mentioned above. The programmes on the radio range from matrimonial services to job advertisements to selling goods to skits and

discussions on various issues related to the lives of men, women and children. It frequently invites film celebrities and known figures from south Asia as its guests. These were avidly listened to by most Gujarati and Sikh women of my study.

Besides this, women also were seen to watch Asian T.V, as it is popularly called. This is the channel available only through satellite connections. But most Gujarati and Sikh households I visited subscribed to this channel, unless women were living on their own in council accommodation and found it expensive subscribing to this service. Asian T.V shows about three to four Indian or Pakistani fims each day. However, women often complained that they have little free time to sit and watch any film properly, but they do whenever they get the time.

However, both Asian radio and Asian T.V were said to entertain and help them forget their worries for a short time. It also gave them a lot of practical information and world news. As one Gujarati woman said, "With my TV and radio I never feel alone at home. I switch them on first thing in the morning and switch them off only when I go to bed".

This was true in not only her case but almost all the Indian houses I visited which usually had either the T.V or radio (sometimes both) playing at all times of the day. This was significant particularly because the Asian media made them feel closer to India, and gave them a sense of happiness and comfort in their ageing years.

5.2c. Reminiscence and other images invoking "security" in old age

Like women who took refuge in religion or the media as a way out of their problems and loneliness, some women used memories or reminiscence for this. Reminiscence, as I see it, does not always involve the process of going over fond memories through speech. A number of my informants re-lived their past through the world they had created on the walls of their bed-rooms (in particular) and other rooms, with photographs of close family members and relatives, and of happy times spent with them. There were usually several photographs of the marriages of their children and of their grandchildren at almost all ages while growing up. Many informants also hung up several calendar pictures of Gods.

This is a striking feature of all Indian houses and is particularly visible in council

accommodation where women are staying on their own. Usually in this type of accommodation - consisting of two room flats, one room would be the *puja* room (prayer room) which would have images and pictures of Gods, along with photographs of their dead parents and in-laws. The other room would have photographs of their living family members.

Women would recount in fond detail, memories associated with the subjects in the photographs. Even if there was a photograph of the woman's husband who had died or children who had turned her out of the house, they would still refer to their happy times with them. Often these references would make their eyes misty with tears as it also reminded them of the pain of loss and separation. But, in all cases, women would soon regain composure, and go back to describing their happy times with the people in the photographs.

Like religious worship, chromolithographs of Gods which were often placed on all the four walls of a room (as if surrounded by divinity), provided them with a sense of security and protection, particularly as they lived alone. One of the women said, "I don't need people to take care of me...my God is with me".

Perhaps these visual forms of reminiscence did have therapeutic value as they definitely gave much happiness and, as I saw it, helped fill the lonely world of women inside their houses and reduced the need for social contact with outsiders they did not care about.

5.3. SUMMARY

This chapter has attempted to show how older Gujarati and Sikh women seek ways of coping with ageing in London. Most of the women living with families, apparently well-integrated, also complained of loneliness, boredom and isolation, of failing physical health and various ailments or of the need to fill the void created by the loss of family members due to death or marriage, etc.

To compensate they extended their social contacts outside the immediate family to a wider group of neighbours, relatives, friends and acquaintances, or found social companionship and meaning in religious activities, watching films, listening to the radio or by having photographs of near and dear ones around them.

Each woman (Gujarati or Sikh) chose her own method or source of interaction and adjustment depending upon her preferences and limitations. These contacts provided them with what Jerrome sums up as "social integration, sense of security, practical and moral support, sociability and entertainment, a system of meaning and a context for ageing" (1992:8).

But this was not for everyone, for some interacted only because they were social creatures craving for company, and who, as many said, "would otherwise go mad". For them interaction with people outside their families gave little or no sense of fulfilment and was too superficial and temporary to replace the deeper feeling of loneliness, isolation and hurt created by their close family members. There was a group of women who found it very difficult to accept reality; they clung fast to a set of expectations which had been betrayed by their children in this new, alien context.

A significant point to note in the interaction patterns and social networks of the ageing women was that their preferrred social contacts were necessarily with members of their own community and, where possible, caste group, even when it was a casual acquaintance. If there were exceptions, there was usually a good reason for it or a limitation imposed by illness and immobility.

Why was this so? Why did women prefer their own communal contacts? What prevented them from interacting with a wider society? Would their social needs be better met if they could or did interact with a wider white society? The answers to these questions can be sought in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI

AGE, GENDER, AND ETHNICITY AMONG GUJARATI AND SIKH WOMEN IN LONDON

6. Introduction

The previous chapter concluded that many Gujarati and Sikh women, in trying to cope with their ageing process, seek Gujarati and Sikh social contacts respectively, or if necessary, other Indian or Asian social contacts. Only one Gujarati woman out of a sample of 120 Gujarati and Sikh women actually interacted with her white neighbour, because they both suffered from chronic arthritis. However she did admit that she found her English neighbour pleasant and was enjoying learning about English culture from her, implying that this involved some transformation of the way she had perceived it while living in London for the last 20 years.

Why was this so? Some observers like Dahya (1973) and Khan (1980) have noted the tendency of ethnic exclusiveness among Indians living in Britain. The reasons generally quoted are language and cultural barriers to communication and homesickness for family and friends. Alternatively, some writers have seen ethnic exclusiveness as "self-containment" of the Indian communities in London (Hahlo,1980:301), or as a reflection of "tight bonds of kinship" (Kelly,1990:259).

This chapter identifies structural aspects in the wider society as the reason for Indians staying together as exclusive, self-contained or tightly bound kinship groups, i.e. it looks at the actual and perceived notions of racism which affects the interaction pattern and life of an ageing Indian woman in London.

Racism is directly linked to notions of security and identity, particularly for aged immigrant women. While the "reality" of many of the racist incidents experienced by Indians living in London is undeniable, racism is always experienced through the filter of preconceptions about "English society", which in turn affects their interaction with that society.

The chapter also brings into focus Kent's hypothesis that "racial disadvantages

disappear because the joint family acts as a medium for social interaction" (1971). But what happens when the joint family structure is not there? Very few Indian families in London live in joint families. So what protection does an ageing Indian woman have against racial disadvantages? Is residence within a community ghetto and interaction almost exclusively within this community an answer to this problem? Why else do Sikh and Gujarati women prefer their own community contacts? If they uphold or break the boundaries of their ethnic groups, why and when do they do it? Do factors like age or sex have any influence on such decisions? These are questions which this chapter addresses.

6.1. Ethnic status of Indians in London

The debate on "ethnicity" has been long, complex and until now inconclusive. However, I prefer to use Abner Cohen's definition which states, "an ethnic group is a section of population of a plural society which shares certain common symbols of normative behaviour (language, religion, caste, region, etc.) and is identified by the other sections in society as constituting a distinct category" (1974:5). However, my preoccupations with definitions of ethnicity to understand the situation of Gujarati and Sikh migrants in Britain was resolved by my informants who equated ethnicity to racism. In light of this understanding, perhaps "race" becomes the common symbol of normative behaviour defining the formation and function of the Indian ethnic group in Britain. Therefore, this is the meaning and usage I have retained in this chapter.

Most English people do not realise the complex divisions of Indian society. Although it has been noted that there are differences between various Indian communities which are stressed and maintained by them, when it comes to an oppositional cultural comparison with English society, Sikhs and Gujaratis regard themselves as "Indians".

For instance, in September 1993, there was a protest by Asian ethnic minorities against the British National Party (BNP). This came after the racial attack on Kuddus Ali, a young Bangladeshi Muslim boy living in East London, by a group of white men and a woman. During that period the situation in east London was tense, with periodic outbursts of protest against the incident by the Bangladeshi Muslims in the area. However, the protest reached its climax because of the coalition against the BNP by a very large group of Asian minorities.

The most significant aspect of the protest was that the people who came together were not just Bangaldeshi Muslims, or Sikhs or Gujaratis, nor even just Indians or Pakistanis alone, but all groups of Asians. During the protest, a middle aged Bangladeshi Muslim was seen showing his British passport and saying "I am also British".

This incident highlights the context in which the various responses of Sikh and Gujarati women to questions of race and ethnicity were made, and provides an important constituent of their identity in Britain. For the ageing women, in particular, identity is linked to their feeling of security in an alien country.

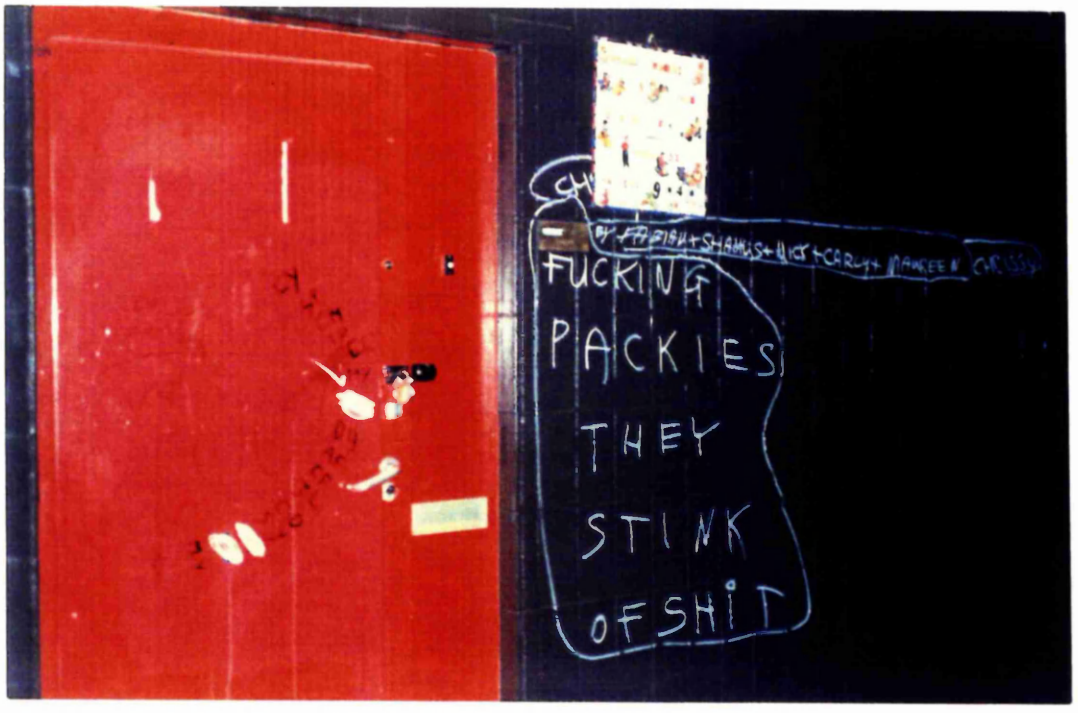
Some of the Gujarati and Sikh women said that Britain was their home or should be by now. Lata said:

> I have lived in London for almost twenty years now, more than I have lived in India or Africa. I know I am going to be here till the day I die. This is my home now and I am fairly happy living with my son's family and being able to see both my married daughters once or twice a month. But I still do not feel very safe or feel at home. It's still a foreign country to me. For example, when I go to my doctor and if I have to wait in the waiting area and see all white people around me, I feel like an outsider there. I hesitate when I talk about my illness to a white doctor - I feel he will not understand me or will laugh at me. I am not imagining this. That is the way they all look at me. Like the other day, some white children shouted at me as I was coming home from the market. They said, `Paki, leave our country, you are making our country smelly'. You can imagine how I felt. I felt very scared (*ghabrāyī*). My reaction was not to tell off those boys who were at least forty years younger me, my grandsons' age, but instead I almost ran into my house for fear they may do something to me.

Thus, for many, racism was a living fear which threatened their sense of security, even when they had their family and friends around them.

As noted in the introduction, during the first few days of my interviews with the Gujarati women, when I mentioned that I was working on aspects of ageing and ethnicity among Indian women in London, I was barraged by instances of racism (*nasalvād*) and discrimination (*bhed bhāv*) which they or their relatives have suffered in England. This was an important pointer to the way almost all my informants equated ethnicity to racism.

It was while talking about their life, and, in particular, their advancing years, that aspects of their life which relate specifically to their ethnic status became apparent. My unstructured questionnaires at this stage attempted to explore and bring forth these issues in some detail.



Racist Graffiti

6.2. AGEING AND ETHNICITY

We may recall three questions asked earlier: Firstly, does the ethnic minority status of the Indians affect the ageing process of women? Secondly, as many of the older Indian women entered Britain as dependents rather than as first category immigrants, does that further define and affect their status within their family and ethnic group? Thirdly, is there any difference between the Gujaratis and Sikhs in this respect?

The response to the first question was largely: the ethnic minority status of the Indians does affect their ageing process. A characteristic explanation was given by a Gujarati woman who said,

> When we came here from Africa, my husband did not get a good job (*sāri naukrī*). He used to get a very poor salary. We had three children who used to go to school, so we had their expense. Then, the houses here are so expensive. What could we do, I also had to find a job. I started working in the catering factory. We could earn just enough to manage. All this is because of this country. The English government gives so much money to the English employees but they discriminate *judāī rākhe che* with us "Asian blacks", that is why we could not put our children in good schools and they could not get us good jobs. If this is not because of "racism" (*nasalvād*) and "discrimination" (*bhed bhāv*), then why is it? That is why we have suffered (*saho che*) all our lives here. Now see, both me and my husband have retired, both my daughters have got married. The house runs on my son's money and the money I get from social security services. But what can we do with that? That is why my daughter-in-law also has to work. And I get "bored" sitting at home. So, I come here [to the organization]. If we were in India, the daughter-in-law would not have been working nor would all the ladies in the neighbourhood be working, so my time would have been spent at home and in the neighbourhood and one would not have had to come to such an organization. There (in India) old age is not felt (*mahsūs nahīṁ hotā*) but here it feels bad (*kharāb lāge che*) and hurts (*duḥkh thāye che*). If something happens suddenly, there is nobody to take care of us. Both my neighbours are working because everyone needs money as one person's pay is not enough to run the family. Most people do not have relations around who can help them and even if they do they too do not earn so much that they can help one another. Anyway, all our relations are in Leicester. My son is working here otherwise we would have gone there as well. So, I was saying that our entire life and our old age has been spoilt (*kharāb*) because of the English and their racism (*nasalvād*) and their discrimination which has forced all of us to work and work and not earn much except that we can continue to live here.

A Sikh woman expressed a somewhat similar opinion. She said,

> My husband died at a fairly young age. My son had come here to work

with his uncle. I also came here after my husband's death. What did I know that life here is so bad? We always thought that *videś* (foreign), would be so good. But here we Indians have to work like donkeys and what fortunes do we earn anyway? Certainly there are more facilities here but then we have to do everything with our hands, no comfort of servants here. Ever since I have come here I have had to work. The moment I came here my son told me that both he and his wife have to work to make ends meet (*guzārā karne ke liye*). I felt very bad (*bahut burā lagā*). I felt even more dependent (*bahut āśrit*) and a bigger burden (*jyādā bojh*) because I was another mouth to feed and another old dependent person to take care of, when things are so expensive and both my son and daughter-in-law are busy working from morning till evening. So, in spite of my minor illnesses and old age I decided to work...any sort of work. With the help of my sister-in-law I found a job in the same factory where she worked. Then, I came to know how this country worked. When my son told me about racism (*nasalvād*) in this country I did not understand much till I started working and saw what he meant. When I joined the factory, an English lady also joined with me. She was being paid double my salary only because she could speak English, but in our job one did not need any language qualifications. I guess that was an excuse to favour [*fāydā* - literally "advantage"] the English. When I told this to my son he said, this is how the English exploit [*fāydā uṭhāte haiṁ* - take advantage] and discriminate (*bhed bhāv*) against the Indians. This he said was racism. Now I can understand why my son gets paid so poorly and why my daughter-in-law and I have to work even though we are women and I am even quite old. And what is worse we have to work for half the income that we should get because we are Indians and the colour of our skin is black (*kālī*). If my son and daughter-in-law had been getting their rightful salaries (*sahi pagār*) I would perhaps have not had to work during my old age or at least I would have been paid as much as the English ladies who work with me which could have given me *kuch hāsil karne kā ahsās* [some sense of achievement] in this age. But instead when I see these English women working with me, I feel angry (*gussā*) and all my enthusiasm (*utsāh*) for the work dies. I feel like a *bhikhari* (beggar) in this country. At times I think, was I meant to see and suffer (*sehnā*) all this in my old age?

On a closer analysis of the above extracts it can be seen that while there are some instances of discrimination which are probably racial in nature, both the women attribute all the problems in their current lives to racism. These explanations, featuring the single factor of racism, have coloured the perception of these women towards all their interactions with members of white society. While a detached observer can distinguish the actual experiences of racism from the women's perceived notions of racism, the women themselves cannot. As a result their interaction with the white society is affected.

The above extracts also relate to Kent's hypothesis by showing that racism (actual or

perceived) affects the family structure, by making it compulsory for wives to go outside the house to work because their husbands do not get paid enough (since white employers are thought to discriminate with pay between black and white workers).

Similar responses were made by a large number of Gujarati and Sikh women. This shows the generality of the issues confronting Indian people living in London, be they Gujaratis or Sikhs. The similarity of their responses not only negates the differences which the women maintain and assert at various points in their lives but shows in what contexts the two seemingly diverse communities come together. This is in treating the English community as the `other' and themselves as `we' Indians or `we' blacks. Ethnicity thus becomes meaningful and operational.

Roger Ballard has noted a parallel phenomena and writes:

> It is of course partly as a consequence of this reaction from the majority that the minorities have organized themselves ethnically. They have utilised as resources the knowledge, skills and values which they brought with them from their homelands to construct institutions of mutual support, a private system of social services as it were, which has enabled them to survive and sometimes to prosper in alien and often hostile surroundings (1979:161).

He adds further that

> Much work has yet to be done on identifying the existing modes of communal support, and on seeking viable ways of strengthening them, instead of trying to replace them (1979:131).

6.3. GENDER AND ETHNICITY

I chose to focus on women in this thesis also because women, like the ethnic minorities, suffer deprivations in social terms. This section will therefore analyse how far the race or ethnic status of the Indians affects the lives of Gujarati, Sikh or Indian women in general.

Both Gujarati and Sikh women in my sample stated how their minority status in this country further aggravated their sexual inferiority, in the words of a Sikh informant, " *yeh gore mardoń ki duniyā* - [in] this white male dominated society". The following are

some of the examples given by Gujarati and Sikh women to illustrate these grievances.

Mala, who is now fifty years old and comes to the Brent Indian Association for *satsang*, is fiercely "anti-British". Some other women, while speaking about their racial experiences or generally about racism, said to me, "you must speak to Mala, she has had some of the worst racial experiences in this country. She is here only because of her husband".

When I spoke to Mala, I found her very bitter about the English and England. Mala began by saying,

> This country has only taken things from me. I have lost everything here. I am here only because of my husband who knows no other home but England having come here at the age of twelve. I don't want to lose him also after I have lost everything else. I came from India to join my husband in 1978 and I got the first taste of this country at the High Commission. The man at the window who took my interview was so shameless (*badtamīz*). He asked me very personal questions about my married life and sexual life with my husband. I answered only because I wanted the visa. Then I was asked to go for a medical check-up. It was no medical check-up, it was checking of only my internal parts [sexual organs]. I was called for the check-up three times...oh yes, it was a male white doctor who examined me each time. I tolerated that too though I knew that it was a horrible racist act, being done only because I was an Indian woman who was believed to be meek (*cup cāp*), simple (*saraṛ*) and tolerant (*bardāśt*) - which I had to be - so they exploited (*fāydā* - took advantage of) me and my sexuality (*aurat hone kā - for being a woman*) even though I was married. But that was not all. When I enrolled for graduation in a college in London, I was the only Indian or even the only black girl in my class. I could take a lot of sneering by my class-mates but then it came to being marked badly on my essays by this one teacher. And once when I protested to the teacher, I was told not to expect to compete with other students because I was an Indian and educated there, meaning that my education in India was as poor as the country. After that I left my studies. I didn't want to be taught by racist teachers and in a racist atmosphere. I was sexually harassed at work too which made me leave my job and five years ago my youngest son was attacked by a group of four white boys and now he is a cripple for life. We have filed a court case but I don't know how many years for the decision because nobody has caught the offenders - so who is to pay? Will this society pay for the wrongs of its members? Will they compensate me for the loss of my job, a better career, education, caring for a cripple son, shame, humiliation and harassment? My husband does not feel it very strongly because it hasn't happened to him directly. At times I wish it would so that he would decide to go back rather than living under this racist hell (*nasalvādī narak*).

Kelly, quoting from Seabrook, writes,

> When the migrants first began to arrive from the subcontinent they did not enter a conceptual vacuum; instead, they were greeted by a powerful and even inflamatory set of preconceptions about Asians, their alien habits and tendencies (1971:43-5 Quoted in Kelly,1990:260).

Thus Indian women's attitudes were based largely on the white society's attitudes towards them.

Parmar records that during 1978 (the year Mala came to London) there was an expose about the vaginal examinations carried out on Asian women to determine whether they were married or were fiancees of men already settled in England (1982:244). Regarding this, Wilson quotes from her interview with Alex Lyon (of the 1976 British Diplomatic mission in India) who said that

> The fact of the matter is that medical examination is carried out to see if they have any communicable disease. If they do, it is thought unwise to allow them to come and settle in this country by and large. If they had a communicable disease and it entailed investigating the vagina to find out, then I suppose the doctor is entitled to do that (1978:76).

Wilson says that "this firm statement of principle looks even more impressive when one considers that white women entering Britain are not subjected to these examinations" (1978:76).

Bhavnani and Parmar state that

> This `testing' is based on the racist and sexual assumption that Asian women from the subcontinent are always virgins before they get married and that it is not in their culture for women to engage in sexual activity before marriage (Bhavnani,1982).

> This kind of absurd generalisation is based on the same stereotype of the submissive, meek and tradition bound Asian woman (Parmar,1982:245).

Parmar also mentions the 1971 Immigration Act; the subsequent legislation aimed at breaking up Asian families; the 1981 Nationality Act which puts further constraints on the right of dependents to join their families in Britain; the 1978 Parliamentary Select Committee, one of whose recommendations was that children over 12 years, born abroad to those settled here, would not be allowed to join their parents (Parmar,1982:246). The 1975 sex discrimination Act, Wilson says, treated

> women as slaves and chattels in their communities, and the government sees no reason to treat them as anything else....they are expected to live in their husbands' countries....they could never bring their husbands, because to do so, they would have to be considered as a head of household and something which....no woman can be unless her husband is dead, or mentally or physically incapacitated (Wilson,1978:82).

These are just a few instances of how Asian women and Asian families have been affected by state legislation (Parmar,1982:246). Thus, immigration legislation played on the gender differences and minority position of the Asians and had a racist nuance which gave rise to feelings of hatred for, and insecurity in, the country where they wanted to live, work and raise a family.

For many, legislative racism coincided with institutional racism (e.g: at the work place, as is clear in the case of Mala). The most commonly reported incidents of institutional racism by Indian women (Gujaratis and Sikhs alike) were those of sexual harassment by their white employers (some of these are referred to earlier in chapter 3.1e).

Mamta, a 52 year old Sikh woman had not turned to any professional help when she was sexually harassed at work but had left the job. She told all her relations and her community that she had left the job because she found working a strain and had started getting migraines so that her husband and doctor had asked her to leave the job. She said that I was only the third person after her husband and her daughter to know about this because, firstly, I was an outsider and would not tell anybody whom she knows and secondly, she wanted to be honest with me as I was doing research on her community and must therefore get the facts right.

So she told me about the incident which led her to leave the job. She said,

> My employer was a white man. When he gave me the job he did not say that we will have to dress in skirts. Anyway, after two days of my joining he came and told me this. There were only three other women with me. They were all English so they anyway wore skirts. I did not protest too much because he said that it was compulsory or else I could leave. So I thought O.K I will wear the skirt and thick leggings. But then when he saw me wearing that he said, he wants me to wear see-through tights like the other girls. I still did not protest too much though I was quite unhappy. My husband also thought it best to keep quiet. But after that my boss would come to me almost everyday and say how good and shapely my legs were and it was such a pity that I had kept them covered in *salwārs* before now. I never answered him back. Then one day, when

> all the three women were on leave, in front of the men workers he said, "men look at her legs, don't you want to see more of those" and they all said, yes. At that point I had had enough. I told this to my husband who actually went to speak to my employer but my employer told him that if he was so touchy about such comments, he should be like all Indian men and keep his wife in *purdāh*. My husband said that he could not say anything to my employer but after that I left my job. I was too ashamed to continue work or to tell anyone about it. My husband was very hurt with what my employer had said and so he told me to stay at home and not bother about working in this country or if I have to work to work for an Indian because any white man could say this and we would not be able to fight him....I know nothing can be done now but I wish something could be.

Two other Sikh women and three Gujarati women in my sample mentioned cases of sexual harassment which were fairly similar to the above mentioned case (some have been discussed in chapter III). They all said that it was primarily against Asian women, not just Indians because in many cases Pakistani and Bangladeshi women were victims as well. It made them feel and suffer as a vulnerable and exploited sex. Men at home were sympathetic but not very helpful because they needed the money and it was not easy finding jobs for a black immigrant woman in this country. Most of these women had suffered for a number of years, continuing to do so even in their later years, with very few women coming to report and seek help till the harassment increased to unbearable limits.

In Chapter III, I pointed out the alternatives available to Asian women (trade unions, etc.) to counter such acts of sexual harassment at work. Yet not many Asian women had been aware of or willing to fight for their rights. It has to be remembered that we are talking of experiences of a fairly old generation who were still quite new to the idea of working outside their houses. Also, many being uneducated were shy and ignorant of the alternatives available to them. And, the topic of a woman's sexuality was still taboo. But these factors are increasingly less of a problem to the younger generation of working women.

But, in the above cases, the problem was not that they were not willing to fight; the problem was that they were not willing to fight with the English employer. They felt insecure as immigrant residents in demanding their rights from the English, portrayed as the rightful owners of the land, who might throw them out of the country. Since they were not willing to risk their residency, they decided to accept the humiliation and suffer guilt and shame at the hands of racist English employers.

However, in the above cases, women were enlarging the boundaries of their Gujarati or Sikh groups and moving towards wider solidarity by acknowledging that most Asian women suffer sexual harassment at the hands of white employers and all black and Asian immigrant women find it difficult getting jobs in this country. The question here is whether this alignment helps them to feel "safety in numbers", or whether it is because they feel the need to overcome the feeling of their gender being in a minority within a minority group of Indians in the U.K? Perhaps both.

This, however, leads us to another issue raised by the cases: - the sense of insecurity. In both cases the husbands were not very willing to fight, because there were English employers and they were immigrants in their employers' country. The husbands wondered if the English employer had almost a right to make female Indian employees serve in whichever way they wished - even sexually. This uncertainty by the husbands suggests an erosion of the traditional notion that husbands should be protectors for their wives.

In the first case, the woman was not satisfied by her husband's response to her sexual harassment at work and, still feeling threatened and insecure, had turned to her son who had directed her to the Asian Women's Forum for greater and more effective protection.

In the second case, though Mamta accepted her husband's reasoning and left her job, she certainly still felt insecure because she wished somebody could act to bring her justice and possibly restore her sense of security and honour.

After hearing her story, I explained to her about the cases I knew where similar things had happened to women at work and how, with professional help, they had been able to get justice and I told her about the various bodies in London which deal with such issues. I also made her believe that she does not need to feel ashamed about what had happened to her because she was a victim, so that she merits sympathy and not shame. After this I went and repeated this to her husband. They reacted as if a big burden had been lifted off their shoulders and I took them to the Asian Women's Forum and left them in the hands of professional advisers. Now the case has reached an Industrial Tribunal hearing. Hopefully justice will be done in this case.

While such instances question the efficacy of the traditional role of male superiority, and of husbands as protectors, they also indicate the newer role of social organizations[25] and trade unions as protectors of women and their sexuality.

Two other almost similar cases were reported by a Gujarati and a Sikh woman regarding the problems they faced in securing a council flat. I met a Gujarati widow who had earlier been living at the Women's Refuge Centre but now had moved to a council flat. I was not given permission to meet the women at the Refuge Centre by its Management Committee, because they said that the women there are usually suffering greatly and need to feel perfectly safe, and that my questions might intimidate them.

When I interviewed her she said,

> You are studying our problems aren't you? Then write about this. Write about how I suffered (*saho*) so many hardships (*pareśāniyāṅ*) for the last two years to get this flat. A dependent (*āśrit*) lonely (*ekalvāyu*) widow (*vidhwā*) who was turned out from the house by her daughter-in-law once her only son also died so tragically last year. She (the daughter-in-law) did not for once think where an uneducated old dependent widow would go. I do not have any relatives here. I had no money to go to India but then there is nobody from my family there. Had this organization or this Refuge Centre not been here where would I have gone? The Council people knew all this. I am also so unwell. I have had a heart attack, all the bones in my body ache so much, I have blood pressure and diabetes. But still the Council people made me wait for two years. Bless the people of the Refuge Centre who gave me shelter and support (*āsrā aur sahāro*) for the last two years. But that is the difference, the Refuge Centre is our Asians' but the Council belongs to English. There is no care (*khyāl*) and concern (*parvāh*) for us in the land of the English. If all this had happened to an English woman she would have got the flat in two months. You would think that they would be sympathetic (*sahānubhūti*) towards an elderly woman but no, they know that we are dependent (*ashāy*) and that we "Asian women" also being aged, cannot fight (*nathī laṛi śaktā*), so what can we do? They can make us wait endlessly (*mane to khūb rah jovaṛāvī*). You are a woman, you should understand this. You write about the state of the dependent women in this country.

It is interesting to note that she blamed her daughter-in-law for turning her out of the house just as she blamed the English council authorities for her struggle over the last two years. Her Gujarati daughter-in-law had no sympathy for her illnesses. She

25. Various voluntary or some other specific organizations set up to help people with problems. They are usually mediating bodies between the community and statutory agencies, and they often have professional advisers.

complained about this when she talked about her broken family life and being left neglected by her daughter-in-law. She agreed that both her daughter-in-law and the English council behaved insensitively (*sahānubhūti nahīṁ dikhāyī*) towards her.

However the Asian Refuge Centre helped. Thus it was the Asian Refuge Centre versus the English council. The enemy was clearly the English council, which made her unite her feelings with those of the other Asian women who could not fight, and who were thus condemned to a long wait and much suffering before they got their demands met by the council. Here, too, perceived racism cuts across the Gujarati boundaries and brings women to unite in a common cause with other Asian women in Britain.

Many women talked about struggling to find a house, and their experiences of trying to find a job here where they were regarded as "black women". One Sikh woman, now retired, told me she was the most unlucky person where jobs were concerned. She said,

> When my husband and I came here from Africa, I tried for a job in a store. They wanted three people, two supervisors and one caretaker-worker. A man got the job of a caretaker-worker and two English women got the job of supervisors. I was the most qualified person amongst the four of us and I could also speak English so there was no reason for disqualifying me except my race. But that was not all; when I did find a job and was working in another Departmental store, when I got pregnant I told my employer casually that I will need some leave after seven months, he gave me notice then and there. The reason given was my pregnancy but actually it was because he wanted to create a job for an English girl who joined the very next day when I left. So once again I suffered as a result of being a woman having become pregnant and being a black woman, who seems to have no right (*haq*) to "demand their rights" in this country.

A similar incident was reported to me by a Gujarati woman who said that,

> I had to leave my job because once when I had a miscarriage, I had to take unexpected leave so naturally I could not give prior notice. So when I reported for the job the next day, my employer gave me notice to leave without giving me any chance to explain anything. This I realised was because he already had somebody in mind for my job as it was quickly filled by an English girl. After that it wasn't easy for me to find a job. I was forced to find private work to do at home for which I was paid much less than my previous job. So this is the price I have paid for being a black woman wanting to work in this country.

Once again the English employer is portrayed as the enemy by both Gujarati and Sikh women who go through almost similar job experiences in this country.

Situations were bad not only for women who were working and were being directly affected by racism, but also for women who were not working and were still being indirectly affected by the discrimination around them. A Sikh woman, who stays with her eldest son and his family in Ealing, met me in the Milap - Day Centre for the Elderly in Southall, and told me how her life is indirectly affected by racism in this country. She began by saying,

> You must be thinking that I sit peacefully (*śāntī nāl*) at home and so what problems (*taklīf*) could I have? But that is not true. If this country had accepted me you think I would need to come from Ealing to Southall just to pass my time? I mean that the place where I stay is surrounded by English people in the neighbourhood. I can also speak English but then it's not whether I can speak their language or not - English people do not want to mix (*milnā*) with us. All my neighbours are very "polite" with me and we exchange "hello" and "how are you?" but they never invite me to talk or have a cup of tea. I invited them informally many times but for the last six years no one came, so I have stopped inviting them now. Now why is this? They hardly know me sufficiently to form their opinions (*vicār*) whether they like me or not but then it seems that they have an opinion for sure because of which they don't want to mix with us. At times it feels that they think we are small and inferior (*chotā aur nīch samajhte haiṅ*) to them. And because I have no company (*saṅg sāth*) there (meaning in the neighbourhood) I have to come here because otherwise I just get so bored and depressed all alone for the whole day in the house. But then, I can't do this everyday or at all times, because I have to do a lot of house work and take care of my grandchildren when they return from school. So that is how I get affected by racism sitting at home. And you ask me whether being a woman I get affected by it more? Yes, that is true. I just told you that I have to do a lot of house work and take care of my grandchildren but if I were a man, I would not be expected to do this. I could do whatever I want. I could come to this organisation everyday and spend my whole day here with friends and people from our country, play cards and see movies [as do most men who come to the organization] etc. - do anything I wished. So I suffer (*sahtī hūṅ*) more loneliness (*akelāpan*) and do much more work because I am a woman and because I have around me English neighbours with whom I cannot communicate or who would not communicate with me. At times I feel what a life, I am isolated in my own family and also in my neighbourhood. If I did not have this Asian Centre to come to I would just rot (*sar*) in my loneliness.

Such examples were reported by a number of Sikh and Gujarati women who lived in English neighbourhoods and who could not or did not interact with their English neighbours. In most cases language was a barrier, but in others it was lack of interest or initiative by both sides. Some of my informants acknowledged feeling self-conscious in saying more than a polite "hello", adding that as they have little in common they don't

always know what to talk about. And, some women said that they do not want to be too friendly, in case they or their children or grandchildren became influenced by western culture. So it was thought better to keep some distance.

Although most women may resent the lack of social interaction with their English neighbours, and see it as their English neighbours' fault, they are not keen to admit that it is also their own reluctance, based upon personal fears of losing their cultural identity through being influenced by western morality which is the real barrier to improved social relationships.

As the Sikh women in the above quotes pointed out, it was more women than men who felt this great need to interact because as they saw it, retired men had more chances of interaction away from their homes and immediate neighbourhood, being less bound by work and responsibility at home in their old age.

However the loneliness experienced by many women, either due to the relations within the family or to lack of social interaction with their English neighbours, makes their ageing process particularly unhappy. Blakemore and Boneham point to the

> ...considerable number of older Asian people who are basically uncomplaining and as yet have made little demand upon social services, but whose position is potentially problematic in the sense that they are either actually socially isolated or to some degree socially or emotionally adrift from the family groups they are living with. At the same time they have little sense of belonging to the wider urban society which surrounds them, and many have worries about being excluded or demeaned by white people (1994:90).

However as we have seen, a significant element in this problem resides in ageing women themselves who throw up barriers of prejudice and pre-conceptions against white society, yet hold expectations of understanding and acceptance from that society. Writers like Blakemore and Boneham (1994) only see part of the picture when they see elderly Indian women as being socially isolated or demeaned by white people.

While one accepts that services provided by the society for ethnic minorities can be improved, Bhalla (1981), Norman (1985) and Patel (1990) have also pointed out the two chief problems of language and awareness which prevents the minority communities from using the services provided.

While Indian women acknowledge the importance of various services provided by the society such as as social welfare benefits, allowances and council flats, which greatly relieve their ageing problems by providing them a measure of physical and economic security, independence and self-respect, few actually expressed their appreciation of these. This, despite the fact that the Indian government has done less for its own elderly people. Dhanjal emphasises this point, "many had gained materially and in terms of security by migration when compared with conditions in their native Punjab or in Africa under political instability" (1976:449). When I raised the topic, some women even acknowledged these benefits as important considerations in their decision to spend their old age in London rather than return home.

6.4. SUMMARY

This chapter has tried to illustrate how racism compounds the handicaps and jeopardies of age and sex, and affects the life course of ageing Gujarati and Sikh women in London. It showed that, even though coping with the ageing process depends upon individual outlook and strength of personality, experiences of racism have important effects on women's lives.

Most Gujarati and Sikh women produced similar responses to questions about how race affects their position as women and their ageing process. Words like *nasalvād* (racism), *judāī rākhe che* (discrimination), *bhed bhāv* (discrimination or bias), *alag* (separate), *gore* (white), *kāle* (black), *hum Indians* (we Indians) were used very frequently to explain their situation in London.

The responses also demonstrated that the responsibility was largely seen to be that of English society, English employers, English councils or English neighbours, while the Asian women presented themselves solely as the victims.

But almost three quarters of the Gujarati and Sikh women admitted that they did not want to be too friendly with the English (*English logoṅ ke sāth jyādā ghulnā milnā nahīṁ hai)* for fear that they might become too susceptible to the influences of an alien culture: children would be influenced by a morally deficient western culture. Thus, though they have to suffer loneliness and exploitation, this is seen as preferable to the dangers of mixing and mingling (*bhāṇvu* in Gujarati and *mil-jul jānā* in Punjabi) with

the English which would endanger "our identity" (*hamari pahcan*) and "our culture" (*hamari sabhyata*). In other words, it is the concern to preserve an identity, which is linked to a culture, that is used to justify the perpetuation of ethnic cleavage.

Many Indian women do not really wish to mix and "assimilate" with English society, but they wish to be treated equally with English women. Such is the nature of discrimination and racism which they face that distinctions or identities based on religion, region, caste or class are subsumed in an oppositional identity with the surrounding culture.

The identity of Sikhs and Gujaratis is fused for certain purposes. In other contexts Gujaratis and Sikhs are keen to assert the differences between themselves, and stress also the differences of region, caste and class within each group. Their common experiences of racism accentuate the two groups' similarities and dissolve momentarily their shifting boundaries.

The boundaries are fluid and often dissolve and merge with that of other minority groups, as happened in the protest against the BNP victory on 13th September 1993, or in the case of my sample, when Gujarati and Sikh women used phrases like "we Asian women" or "we black women".

However, the formation of such an ethnic identity is usually neither strong or lasting. This has profound consequences at a political level for as Khan notes:

> One reason for the under-representation of Asians in Britain, their lack of grass-roots organisation and representative leaders is the differentiation within the Asian population based on ethnic, regional, religious and socio-economic backgrounds (1980:185).

The ethnic identity of Indians is also weakened by class. In my whole year of fieldwork I did not see a single rich Indian woman from the estimated one hundred U.K resident Asian millionaire families, coming to the organization to offer monetary or other support. All the workers at the organizations, voluntary and paid, are drawn from the lower and middle classes.

Class divisions were also apparent in women's responses to the *Ayodhyā - Bābrī Masjid* issue in India in December 1992. While women from the upper class in the Indian

community voiced disapproval of the incident in India and in Britain, and criticised the Indian government, it was working class women often on poor salaries who came forward to make contributions to the Southall Monitoring Group (SMG) who had invited academics and social commentators from India to speak on the issue. It was these women, who frequently did not understand English, who came to all the talks and, through the use of interpreters (provided by SMG), attempted to understand the dynamics of the problem affecting their homeland, India. Upper class Indian women were conspicuous by their absence.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

7. Introduction

I will attempt to draw my analysis of the lives and experiences of Gujarati and Sikh women ageing in London to a conclusion. All informants were asked three questions at the end of the interviews. Firstly, "How would you sum up your life in one word?"; secondly, "How do you feel about your ageing years in London, in one word?"; thirdly, "What have you achieved in your life, in one word?"

In answering the first question, informants summed up their lives by one of the following words: "problematic" (*pareśān*), "struggle" (*jaddo-jahad*), "work" (*kām*), "depressing or sad" (*duḥkhī*), "tense" (*tanāv-pūrṇa*), "migratory" (*ek jagāh se dūsrī jagāh*), "unstable" (*asthir*), "test" (*parikśā*), "deficient" (*kamiyāṁ*) and "all right" (*ṭhīk-ṭhāk*). As for their various feelings about their ageing years, the sentiments ranged from: "sad" (*duḥkhī*), "lonely" (*akelī*), "tired" (*thāki*), "satisfied" (*saṁtuṣt*), "free" (*swatantra*), "contented or fulfilled" (*bhar-pūr*) and "waiting for death" (*maut kā intzār*).

In considering the life experiences of ageing Gujarati and Sikh women which I have outlined in the previous chapters, it cannot be denied that most of the informants have experienced much difficulty and trauma in their lives. The closest that anybody came to describing life in any positive light was with the word "all right" and themselves as "satisfied" and "contented".

Yet opposed to this almost all informants described their achievements in positive, confident terms. They saw themselves variously as having gained: "experience" (*tazurbā*), "confidence and courage" (*himmat*), "strength' (*tākat*), "tolerance and patience" (*sahan-śaktī*), "self reliance" (*apne pairoṁ par kharā honā*) and "understanding of the world" (*duniyā kī samajh*).

Thus while most of my informants had problems and were often depressed and lonely, each one had a sense of having achieved or earned something positive from their experiences in life. In such cases life-review encouraged self-preservation, contrary to

Bornat's (1994) distinction between the two. While in many cases this distinction is retained I found life-review and self-preservation to be most commonly united. In many cases, my informants' lives have been a story of self-preservation as a member of a minority, or as a migrant journeying from one continent to another, eventually to contemplate death in an alien country surrounded by children and grandchildren who might embody alien western values.

The theoretical concern of this thesis was with the conflict between expectation and experience which most of the informants seemed to have faced. Their expectations - based on an ideal world are transformed by their day-to-day experiences in London. Informants continue to base their expectations upon a traditional and idealised Indian life; even if they have lived here for thirty or more years, Britain still remains for them a foreign country with alien and negative values.

This conflict seems to deepen and widen with their advancing years as they make little effort to resolve it. It colours most aspects of their lives both in the work place and at home when they assess relationships with close and distant family members. Yet they also have a sense of achievement. A review of the crucial stages of informants' lives, and their responses may throw light upon this apparent paradox.

7.1. Migration and Settlement

Eighty percent of informants came to London via Africa, and twenty percent came directly from India. Although there was a regional, linguistic and religious division between the Gujaratis and Sikhs, as well as a slight difference in their pattern of migration and settlement in Africa (i.e Gujaratis were more likely to have joint or extended kin networks with them) both sets of migrants went through largely similar experiences. These involved losses of property and traumatic displacement.

Settling in Britain proved a more difficult and disheartening experience than most had expected. Life in India (where some migrants returned temporarily) was even more disappointing. Remaining in the U.K, despite its racism and economic challenges was seen by many as the only possible compromise.

The 20% of Gujaratis and Sikhs who came from India were largely elderly dependent

or widowed parents who came to join their children in the U.K. Their happy times with wider families and kin networks, a familiar language and culture, were all behind them. Most young or middle-aged women who had migrated to Africa, usually on marriage, and sometimes with parents, had found a sudden freedom to work and earn. They were able to break free from their expected role in the domestic world and employment in a diversity of fields. They found a new freedom in being able to socialize and learn from other people and gained confidence in their ability to work and support themselves. This was an achievement for women from poor, rural backgrounds. In Africa, most women who had worked, had chosen to work, seeing the opportunity to earn and had received support from other women in their community who had started working too. This study has pointed out the differences in the religious and educational backgrounds of women which contributed to the degree of waged work. More Gujarati Ismaili and Ramgardiah Sikh women worked compared to Gujarati Hindu and Jat Sikh women. However, women generally enjoyed their life more in Africa than in India. The relatively greater wealth in Africa had allowed most Indian families to go to India to meet parents and friends more frequently, which made them feel closer to their roots. But much of this changed on migration to Britain. For many, work was transformed from an option into an unavoidable product of economic exigency. Nevertheless, this necessary form of employment also, became a means of self-liberation for many.

7.2. Working in London

Working was not easy for women migrants in London. As Phizacklea notes, many women suffered from disadvantages such as language deficiency and a lack of recognized skills. A woman migrant waged worker found herself being exploited on the basis of these disadvantages by both indigenous and male migrant entrepreneurs (Wilson,1978; Hoel,1982; cited in Phizacklea,1983:3). The exploitation entailed poor pay, arduous work, long working hours and poor conditions, plus sexual harassment and racial discrimination.

If women were exploited at work, they were also subtly exploited at home. Not only were they expected to work and contribute to the family income, they were also expected to continue all their domestic duties unchanged and frequently without help or support.

Often women had been asked by their husbands or their families to work. When women faced problems at work they were asked either to ignore them or tolerate them, as the family needed the money, and jobs were difficult to find. Men's roles as protectors and providers for their wives and their families was held in abeyance in the face of these difficulties.

Most women's salaries went into their husbands' accounts, or they had a joint account, or it went to the in-laws (if they lived in joint families) because wives' earnings were always taken as supplementary to their husbands' income, even where they may have been earning more than their husbands. Although this undermined the role of the husbands as bread-winners, or as protectors and providers for their wives and families, women very rarely used their financial power to secure a better status for themselves within their families. Although they had an inferior position in their households vis-a-vis men, their earnings did, however, give them a sense of security and freedom through the knowledge that if they wished, they could protest against their low status within their families. If they decided to resist their subjugation, or were turned out after demanding a better status, they would be able to support themselves through their earnings. Thus women continued to work for economic reasons, and for the increasingly valued freedom and self-esteem which their earnings gave them. This, diminished the power of other males in the household.

Harris has quite rightly pointed out that "women can only be fully domesticated where men are wealthy and powerful enough to dispense with their abilities and labour and confine them to instruments of reproducing male stock" (1981:153).

It would be inaccurate to see my employed informants as non-liberated, completely domesticated or inferior to men. While some women realised this and, at times, demanded to be treated equally (as is their right in the Sikh and Ismaili faiths) other women also knew that they had a series of choices if they so desired. Women were learning and achieving as a result of their employment status whether they enjoyed work or not. Even after retirement, they felt relatively secure because they had pensions and welfare benefits to rely on.

It was the women who had migrated to London in their advanced years as widowed and dependent parents to live with their sons who were the most vulnerable group,

particularly if they could not get along with their daughters-in-law. In this, both Gujarati and Sikh women were alike, for religion helped very little in such cases. They usually had to depend upon relatives and state agencies to ease their predicaments. It was these women especially who often described their achievement as "knowledge of the world" (half sarcastically), implying that they have experienced the bitter realities of life.

7.3. Family structure and relationships

The family structure and life of Indians in London have undergone many changes. These changes have often been blamed on the influence of a western life-style which promotes nuclear families. But the existence of joint families usually reflects some economic problem. Some Sikh families, however, defended (and practised) joint family residence in London on the grounds of community feeling (*birādarī*), preached by their religion and practised in their villages. While most women preferred living without in-laws, ironically, they themselves in their old age expected to stay with their eldest son and his family, as was the norm in the Indian tradition.

My sample, however, showed a high number of women living alone, usually in council accommodation. The main reason for this was the women's inability to get along with their daughters-in-law. Sometimes the women themselves had chosen to move out of their son's house, but in some cases the son had asked them to do so, leaving no scope for adjustments in relationships. In fact, in their ageing years, the central most important relationship affecting a woman's position at home in her family was her relationship with her daughter-in-law.

The prime reason for tension in this relationship was the mother-in-law's double expectations. While many women talked of taking *sanyās* (as they should ideally), they knew well that they could not or would not, because they loved their family too much and wanted to feel central to it. Dumont, while acknowledging the important place of the notion of "renunciation" in Hinduism (discussed in 1.3a) has pointed out several problems in the way the idea has been conceived. He writes, "The artificiality of this theory has been noted, for it juxtaposes obligatory stages (novice, householder) and optional stages (that of hermit, *vānaprastha*, is even archaic)" (1960:45). For my informants, the idea of renunciation was resisted because the option of *sanyās* was seen as an "isolating and lonely" experience. Therefore, while a woman resisted what was

expected of her according to ideal Indian tradition, she nonetheless based her expectations of her daughter-in-law on them. She would expect the daughter-in-law to serve her, to obey her unquestioningly, and leave her with all authority and control in the house.

However life in a western country demanded a different set of values, for here a daughter-in-law often had to go out to work, leaving her little time to attend to the house work and her children. Usually the better education and income of the daughter-in-law was seen as threatening to the authority and position of the mother-in-law in her son's house.

Within this power matrix much depended upon the particular succession of residents i.e. who had lived in the house the longest. Also important was ownership by either the son or daughter or the wife of the house after the father's/husband's death. Both these aspects, i.e. the relative position as an outsider or insider and the ownership of the house, were important in determining the control, authority and status between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, as well as determining who would leave the house if one could not get along with the other. These three factors eventually decided much of the success of family life of a Sikh or Gujarati woman in her ageing years.

However, whether women were in control in the house or not, they did not relish the idea of disengagement in old age. Women would rather be active, and do more than their share of the house work in their advanced years, if it meant being able to live with their son's family. Thus the disengagement versus activity theory of ageing was not applicable in many cases. Often whether they chose to disengage or remain active depended upon their own choice, although the choice could be influenced by personal limitations, which were often emotional in nature. Thus one could make a distinction between emotional disengagement and social disengagement. But often the two were related.

Many informants were also unable to resist the extra activities which came with increases in their roles, e.g as grandmothers which they generally preferred not to resist, in spite of advancing years. If a woman was anxious about bringing up her children in a western country, and went out of her way to make sure that her children were socialized properly in the religious and cultural values of their community and country,

she was even more anxious about the upbringing of her grandchildren. In London where most young mothers go out to work, the main child care responsibility and socialization is given to the grandmother who, particularly on retirement, is expected to take over the extra work.

Rosow (1965, 1976) has talked of role losses of the elderly in American society, but here we see role enhancement and substitution (Shanas and Townsend,1965:8), with grandmothers becoming the prime agents of socialization of their young grandchildren.

However, disengagement comes despite the increased roles and activities in old age vis-a-vis their grandchildren as the latter grow older. Even where grandchildren had been socialized by their grandmothers, they tended to drift apart and spend more time with westernized peer groups as they reached school age.

Grandmothers who have a particularly low or negligible level of education and knowledge of English as well as low respect in their houses, experience disengagement more. Religion, regional, linguistic and caste differences between Gujaratis and Sikhs are not in this context hugely important.

7.4. Social networks

While several informants complained of feeling lonely, dejected and disappointed by their family lives, and with family members, none of them had given up hope or stopped wishing to go back to India to familiar surroundings.

Being social creatures, most women chose a particular strategy or social contact to help them adjust to their ageing process. Their choices usually depended upon individual personalities, philosophies (religious at times), life-styles and perceptions about their ageing. But what was important to note was that most women, unless completely immobile, made efforts to socialise and were prepared to travel long distances on bus or foot to do so. Thus none remained socially isolated.

The most common social contacts were neighbours, old friends, relatives and acquaintances. Thus with retirement or ageing, a woman's world extended to wider social contacts.

Other strategies to keep themselves socially occupied, as well as help answer important dilemmas involved religious worship and activities and the media (primarily Asian radio and T.V).

All these social contacts and other strategies were restricted to their own or the Indian community. The Asian channels on radio and satellite TV built a familiar world for an ageing woman. Some women found these sources of social contact meaningful and helpful in relieving their pain, sadness or loneliness. Many informants lived on the border between happiness (*suḳkh/kḳushī*) and sadness (*duḳkh*), which reflected their own perceptions of experiences in life and their ageing process. This rendered categories like the *Āśramdharma* classification, or religious, regional or caste differences limited in scope and applicability, giving precedence to the different contexts in which these distinctions were situated.

7.5. Interaction with the wider white society

The thesis noted the interaction of the Sikh and Gujarati women with the wider, particularly white, community in London.

Immigration laws restricting the entry of Asian migrants to Britain were the starting point of a series of discriminations which Indians in my sample faced on coming to London. After this there were problems of securing a house and employment.

The problems encountered in the housing market and in finding suitable employment were not simple reflections of Indian home buyers' economic weakness, or employees' lack of skills, but were rather because of discrimination by the wider society. By earning less money for their work, they were forced to buy only poor quality houses, and live in cheap areas. They were also given low paid arduous jobs. Indian women faced discrimination not only in terms of their race, but also in terms of their gender. These experiences were to foster a solidarity with Asian and black women which submerged all ethnic and national boundaries.

Whether racism had been actually experienced, or learnt about through other people's experiences, it was enough to change people's perception of the whole white population.

Therefore racism, actual or perceived, is what unites all Indian communities in London, where there is little pretence of religious, regional, caste and linguistic distinctions.

To these perceptions of racism are added biases and cultural stereotypes of white society by the Indians, e.g when an Indian women used the word `western' it was to refer specifically to the morality of whites, seen by Indians in a negative light, as implying loose behaviour (*khulī sabyatā*). McDonald (1993) outlines the Indian attitude to western morality (discussed in Chapter I.3e). It is the fear of being influenced by western morality, and exposing their children and grandchildren to it, that restricts women's interaction with white society. This influence is seen as particularly threatening to their "identity" in a foreign and western country.

Although most feel the need to be acknowledged and accepted by white society, they nevertheless want to keep the interaction limited. They are afraid of betraying allegiance to their own culture. The older a woman gets, the greater the fear of culture threat becomes, because she feels particularly vulnerable as a dependent minority woman who wishes to be able to interact with a wider society, particularly if she is lonely in her family, or living alone. If she lives alone, western society and its morality (with no respect for elderly people and lack of family ties) often gets blamed for that aspect of her children's behaviour which has forced her to live alone.

Thus racism works at many levels, and grievances against English society are expressed in many ways. Yet almost all women acknowledged the advantages of their ageing life in a western country. In this country there are social welfare benefits, medical benefits and council accommodation available to those in need. These benefits give women economic security. Most studies on elderly persons in India (Vatuk,1990; Jain and Menon,1991) have pointed out that the single most prominent worry that the aged have in India is economic insecurity. Manohar Shyam Joshi, a novelist and T.V soap opera author, writes "respect today has less to do with age and more to do with money" (Menon and Jain,1991:29). Vatuk (1990) pointed out in her study of elderly people in Delhi that most wanted to die while "their hands and feet were still working" as they did not wish to be an economic burden on their children's family. Why the parents linked their physical condition to economics is interesting. It can perhaps be explained through the activity and disengagement theory of ageing. Parents, even after retirement, particularly women who do not work, feel that they earn their daily bread in their house

while they can work and keep active. Physical disengagement would stop this contribution and make them economically dependent.

However, elderly people in my London sample do not suffer anxieties on this scale because of various state benefits. This has allowed many women to live alone and support themselves. They feel self-reliant even while not working in their ageing years. It has also given them self-respect and confidence in themselves by not having to depend upon relatives or kin for support, as they would have had to do if they were in India. Although desiring greater contact with their wider kin, familiar surroundings and culture in India, very few actually wished to return to either India or Africa, as they have more to lose than gain in spending their ageing years in India, both economically and emotionally. For their children, particularly their sons, are all here.

My women informants have had many negative experiences; most have gone through migration and settlement twice (Bhachu, 1985). They have experienced profound changes in their lives and adjusted to them. The pain, hurt and isolation worsens with age, particularly with migration, bereavement and relocation of children to other towns. This is sometimes compounded by decisions to separate because of tensions in family life.

Ageing women used various strategies in their daily life. Although they ruminate, reminisce and complain about the tensions and disappointments which stem from their thwarted expectations, they are nevertheless all survivors and have a sense of having achieved much. It is this sense of achievement and inner strength which has kept many women from returning to India, or ending their years in Asian old peoples' homes.

7.6. Scope of present research

This research has tried to contribute to the study of ageing processes among first generation women migrants to Britain who are growing older in an alien country.

Theoretically, it sees their lives as being characterized by the tension between their expectations which are based on a particular construction of Indian traditions and their experiences in a western country. This tension explains much of the emotional problems and problems of adjustment which thay face, particularly as this tension intensifies with

age.

In conclusion the thesis reviews some ways of understanding and coping with this tension in the life of ageing Indian women in London.

On a general level this research implicitly aims to suggest that a theoretical model of conflict between the worlds of expectation and experience is also a way of understanding the ageing experiences of women from all migratory communities living in a western country.

Substantially, this research has filled some lacunae in our knowledge about Indians living in Britain.
Firstly, it has presented an account (from a sample of 120 low and middle income women) of female migration of Indians and their settlement patterns in London.
Secondly, it has given us the employment history and experiences of these first generation Indian women migrants.
Thirdly, it has looked at the relationship between generations from the perspective of older women.

This research has added to the life-text theory which emphasises the importance of "context" and the role of "perception" in guiding responses to life situations.

7.7. For further research

While this research has explored various themes, hypotheses and theoretical constructs, and has tried to answer selected questions related to the lives and ageing process of a sample group of Gujarati and Sikh women living in London, the research has, by the nature of its design, purpose and limitations left many other questions unanswered.

This research could be extended usefully by the study of the ageing process of Indian men and a comparison made with the data on Indian women given here.

It would also be valuable to study how various life experiences and processes have changed over generations through a study of second and third generations of Indians in Britain. Finally, it would perhaps be worthwhile to compare the data cross-culturally

with that of Indian women ageing in India.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbs, P. 1983. Autobiography: Quest for identity. In *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature. 8. The Present.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Abendstern, M. 1986. Life Histories and Ageing. ESRC Research on Ageing Workshop. (unpublished).

Agnihotri, R.K. 1987. *The Crisis of Identity: The Sikhs in England.* New Delhi: Bahri Publications.

Allen, S. 1971. *New Minorities , Old Conflicts: Asian and West Indian Migrants in Britain.* New York: RandomHouse.

_____ 1987. White migrants: Black workers. *New Community.***7.** 11-18.

Anwar, M. 1979. *The Myth of Return.* London: Heinemann. Publications.

Appudurai, A. 1988. How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India. *Comparative Studies in Society and History.* **30**, 3-24.

Arber, S and Ginn, J. 1991. *Gender and Later Life.* London: Sage Publications.

Aristotle. 1959. *Aristotelis Rhetorica:* in Arabic vertusa versione.

Atiya. N. 1982. *Khul Khal: Five Egyptian women tell their stories.* New York: Syracuse University Press.

Ballard, C. 1979. Conflict, Community and Change: Second generation South Asians. In *Minority Families in Britain* (ed.) V.S Khan. London: MacMillan.

Ballard, R. 1972-1973. Family organization among the Sikhs in Britain. *New Community.* **2**, 12-24.

_____ 1976-1977. Arranged marriages in the British context. *New Community.* **6**, 181-96.

_____ 1979. Ethnic Minorities and the Social Services. In *Minority Families in Britain* (ed.) V.S. Khan. London: The MacMillan Press Ltd.

_____ 1983. The context and consequences of migration: Jullundur and Mirpur compared. *New Community.* **11**, 117-36.

_____ 1990. Migration and Kinship: the differential effect of marriage rules on the process of Punjabi migration to Britain. In *South Asians Overseas: Migration and Ethnicity* (eds) C. Clarke, C. Peach and S. Vertovec. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ballard, R and Ballard, C. 1977. The Sikhs: The development of south Asian settlements in Britain. In *Between Two Cultures: Minorities in Britain* (eds). J.L. Watson. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Barth, F (ed.) 1969. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries.* London: Allen and Unwin.

Barot, R. 1972-1973. A Swaminarayan Sect as a Community. *New Community*. **2**, 34-37.

_____ 1980. "The Social Organization of a Swaminarayan Sect in Britain". Ph.D Thesis. School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

_____ 1987. Caste and Sect in the Swaminarayan movement In *Hinduism in Great Britain* (ed.) R. Burghart. London: Tavistock Publications.

_____ 1991. "Bristol Indian Association". Provisional Draft of paper presented at School Of Oriental and African Sudies, University of London.

_____ 1993. Religion, Ethnicity and social Change: An Introduction In *Religion and Ethnicity: Minorities and Social Change in the Metropolis* (ed.) R. Barot. Netherlands: Pharos.

_____ 1994. The Indian Joint Family and its Future in Britain. *Sambhav*. 75-76.

Bennett, L. 1983. *Dangerous Wives And Sacred Sisters: Social and symbolic roles of high caste women in Nepal*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Bergin, A.E. 1983. Religiosity and menatal health: a critical re-evaluation and meta-analysis. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*. **14**, 170-84.

Berkner, L.K. 1972. The stem family and the development cycle of the peasant household: An eighteenth century Austrian example. *American Historical Review*. **77**.

Bernard, M and Meade, K. 1993. *Women Come of Age: Understanding the Lives of Older Women*. London: Edward Arnold.

Bhachu, P. 1984. East African Sikhs in Britain: experienced settlers with traditionalistic values. *Immigrants and Minorities*. **3**.

_____ 1985. *Twice Migrants: East African Settlers in Britain*. London: Tavistock Publications.

_____ 1988. Apni marzi kardhi Home and Work: Sikh women in Britain In *Enterprising Women* (eds). S Westwood and P. Bhachu. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Bhalla, A and Blakemore, K. 1981. *Elders in the Minority and Ethnic Groups*. AFFOR, Birmingham.

Bharati, A. 1967. Ideology and content of caste among the Indians in East Africa. In *Caste in Overseas Indian Communities* (ed.) B. M. Schwartz. California: Chandler Publishing Company.

Bhatnagar,G.S and Randhawa, M. Social Adjustment among Retired Persons. In *Aging In India* (eds). M.L Sharma and T.M Dak. Delhi: Ajanta Publications.

Bhatti, F. M. 1989-1990. Social Isolation: the case of south Asian women in Britain. *New Community*, **5**, 115-17.

Bhavani, K. K. 1982. Racist attacks, racism, racialism in Britain in 1980s. *Spare Rib.* **115.**

Blakemore, K. 1985. The State, the voluntary sector and new developments in the provision for the old of minority racial groups. *Ageing and Society.* **5,** 175-90.

_____ and Boneham, M. 1994. *Age, Race and Ethnicity.* Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Blau, Z.S. 1973. *Old Age in a Changing Society.* New York: Franklin Watts.

Bond, J, Coleman, P and Peace, S. 1993. Ageing in the twentieth century. In *Ageing In Society: an introduction to social gerontology* (eds). J. Bond, P. Coleman and S. Peace. London: Sage Publications.

Bond, J, Briggs, R and Coleman, P. 1993. The Study of Ageing In *Ageing In Society* (eds). J. Bond, P. Coleman and S.Peace. London: Sage Publications.

Boneham, M. A. 1976-1977. Ageing And Ethnicity In Britain: the case of elderly Sikh women in a Midlands town. *New Community,* **5,** 447-49.

Bornat, J (ed.) 1994. *Reminiscence Reviewed: perspectives. evaluations,achievements.* Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Bourdieu, P. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice.* (Translated by Richard Nice). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Burner, J.S. 1991. Self-making and World-making. *Journal of AestheticEducation.***25,** 65-78.

Butler, R.N. 1963. The Life review: An interpretation of reminiscence in the aged. *Psychiatry.* **26,** 65-76.

Caplan, P. (ed.) 1987. *The Cultural Construction of Sexuality.* London: Tavistock Publications.

Cavan, R.S. Burgess, R.J. and Goldhamer, H. 1949. *Personal Adjustment in Old Age.* Chicago: Science Research Associates Inc.

Cogwill, D.O. and Holmes, L.D (eds). 1972. *Ageing And Modernization.* New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Cohen, Abner. (ed.) 1974. *Urban Ethnicity.* London: Tavistock Publications.

Cohen, Anthony. (ed.) 1982. *Belonging: Identity and Social organization in British rural cultures.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Coleman, P. 1990. Religion, ageing and adjustment questions for research. *Generations, Bulletin of the British Society of Gerontology.* **13,** 10-14.

Coleman, P. 1994. Reminiscence within the study of ageing: The social significance of story. In *Reminiscence Reviewed: perspectives, evaluations, achievements* (ed.) J. Bornat. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Connerton, P. 1989. *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge Universuty Press.

Cornwell, J. 1984. *Hard Earned Lives: Accounts of health and illness from East London*. London: Tavistock Publications.

Cool, L. E. 1981. Ethnic Identity: a source of community esteem for the elderly. *Anthropological Quarterly*. **54**, 179-89.

Cooper, D. 1971. *The Death of the Family*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Cumming, E, and Henry, W. E. 1961. *Growing Old: the process of disengagement*. New York: Basic Books.

Cunningham, B.S. 1984. We Don't Talk About It...Issues of Gender and Method in the portrayal of grandfatherhood. *Sociology*. **18**, 325-38.

_____ 1985. Constructing Grandparenthood: Anticipating Appropriate Action. *Sociology*. **19**, 421-36.

Dahya, B. 1973. Pakistanis in Britain: Transients or Settlers. *Race*. **14**, 241-77.

Delamont, S. 1980. *The Sociology of Women: An Introduction*. London: Allen and Unwin.

Desai, K. G. 1988. The Aged And Society. In *The Ageing in India* (eds). A.B Bose and K.D Gangrade. Delhi: Abhinav Publications.

Desai, R. 1963. *Indian Immigrants in Britain*. London: Cambridge University Press for I.R.R.

Dex, S 1985. *The Sexual Divisions of Work*. Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books.

Dhanjal, B. 1976-1977. Sikh women in Southall: Some impressions. *New Community*. **5**, 109-15.

Doughty, A and Doughty, P. 1974. *Language and Community*. London: Edward Arnold.

Douglas, J.D. 1971. *American Social Order: social rules in a pluralistic society*. New York: Free Press.

Dowd, J. J. and Bengston, V. L. 1978. Aging in Minority populations - an examination of the double jeopardy hypothesis. *Journal of Gerontology*. **33**, 427-36.

Dumont, L. 1960. World Renunciations in Indian Religions. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*. **4**, 33-62.

Dwyer, R. 1993. Caste Religion and Sect in Gujarat: The followers of Vallabhacharya and of Swaminarayan (draft of a paper sent for publication).

Eisenstadt, S. N. 1956. *From Generation to Generation*. New York: The Free Press.

Epstein, A.L. 1978. *Ethos and Identity*. London: Tavistock Publications.

Fardon, R. (eds). 1990. *Localising Strategies: The Regionalization of Ethnographic Accounts*. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press.

Featherstone, M and Hepworth, M. 1989. Images of Ageing. In *Ageing In Society: an introduction to social Gerontology* (eds) J. Bond and P. Coleman. London: Sage Publications.

Fennel, G, Phillipson, C and Evers, H. 1988. *The Sociology of Old Age*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Fischer, D.H. 1978. *Growing old in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Foner, N. 1984. *Ages In Conflict: A cross-cultural perspective on inequality between old and young*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Francis, D. 1984. *Will You Still Need Me, Will You Still Feed Me, When I'm 84?*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Fry, C.L. 1990. The life course in context: Implications of comparative research. In *Anthropology and Ageing: Comparative Reviews* (ed.) R.L. Rubenstein. Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Gearing, B and Dant, T. 1990. Doing Biographical Research. In *Researching Social Gerontology: Concepts, Methods and Issues* (ed.) S. M. Peace. London: Sage Publications.

Ghai, Y. 1975. Amin and the Asians. *Times Literary Supplement*. **4** July, 738-9.

Ghosh, B.R. 1974. Changes in the Size and Composition of the Household Brought About by Urbanization in Delhi Area. In *The Family in India: A Regional View* (ed.) G. Kurian. The Hague: Mouton.

Gifford, Z. 1990. *The Golden Thread: Asian Experiences of Post-Raj Britain*. London: Grafton Books.

Gittins, D. 1985. *The Family in Question: Changing Households and Familiar Ideologies*. London: MacMillan Publications.

Goldstein, M.C, Schuler, S and Ross, J.L. 1982. Social And Economic Forces Affecting Integrational Relations In Extended Families. In A Thirld-World Country: A Cautionary Tale From South Asia. *Journal Of Gerontology*. **38**, 716-24.

Hadjifotiou, N, 1983. *Women and Harassment at Work*. London: Pluto.

Hagestad, G. 1985. Older women in intergenerational relartionships. In *The Physical and Mental Health of the Aged Women*. M. Huag. New York: Springer.

Hahlo, K. G. 1980. Profile of a Gujarati Community in Bolton. *New Community*. **8**, 295-307.

Hallam, R. 1971-1972. The Ismailis In Briatin. *New Community*. **1**, 383-88.

Hammersley, M and Atkinson, P. 1983. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London and New York: Tavistock Publications.

Hareven, T. 1982. *Family Time and Industrial Time*. New York: CambridgeUniversity Press.

Harlan, W. H. 1964. Social Status of the aged in three Indian villages. *Vita Humana*. **7**, 239-52.

Harris, O. 1981. Households as Natural Units. In *Of Marriage and the Market: Women's subordination internationally and its lessons* (eds). K. Young, C, Wolkowitz and R McCullaugh. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Heckman, F. 1983. Towards the development of a typology of minorities. In *Minorities: Community and identity* (ed.) C. Fried. Berlin, New York and Tokyo: Sringer-Verlag.

Helweg, A. 1979. *Sikhs In England: The development of the migrant community*. Oxford: Oxford UniversityPress.

_____ 1983. Emigrant remittances: their nature and impact on a Punjabi village. *New Community*, **10**, 435-43.

Hoel, B. 1982. Contemporary clothing `sweatshops', Asian female labour and collective organization. In *Work, Women and the Labour Market*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Holzberg, C. 1982. Ethnicity and Ageing: anthropological perspectives on more than just the minority elderly. *The Gerontologist*. **33**, 249-57.

Hunt and Walker. (eds). 1974. *Ethnic Dynamics: Patterns of inter group relations in various societies*. Illinois: Dorsey Press.

Hutnik, N. 1991. *Ethnic Minority Identity: A social psychological perspective*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Itzin, C. 1990. Age and Sexual Divisions: a study of opportunity and Identity in Women. Ph.D Thesis, University of Kent.

Jackson, J. J. 1980. *Minorities and Ageing*. Wandsworth: Belmont.

Jain, M and Menon, R. 1991. Greying of India. *India Today*. September 30.

James, A. 1974. *Sikh Children In Britain*. London: Oxford University Press and Institute of Race Relations.

Jeffery, P. 1979. *Frogs in a Well: Indian women in purdah*. London: Zed Books.

Jeffery, P. Jeffery, R and Lyon, A. 1989. *Labour Pains and Labour Power: Women and Childbearing in India*. London: Zed Books.

Jerrome, D. 1986. The Significance of Friendship for Women in Later Life. *Ageing and Society*. **6**, 175-95.

_____ 1992. *Good Company: An anthropological study of old people in groups*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Johar, S. S. 1988. *The Sikh Religion.* Delhi: National Book shop.

John, D.W. 1969. *Indian Worker's Association in Britain.* London: Cambridge University Press for I.R.R.

Johnson, M.L. 1976. That was Your Life: A Biographical Approach to Later Life. In *Dependency or Interdependency in Old Age* (eds). J. Munnichs and W. Van Den Heuval. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Kakar, S. 1979. Setting the stage: the traditional Hindu view and the psychology of Erik H. Erikson. In *Identity and Adulthood* (ed.) S. Kakar. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

_____ 1981. *The Inner World: A psycholo-analytic study of childhood and society in India.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Kallarackal, A.M and Herbert, M. 1976. The happiness of Indian immigrant children. *New Society.* 26th February, 422-24.

Kanitkar, H. 1972. An Indian elite in Britain. *New Community.* **1**, 378-82.

_____ 1993. Upnayana Ritual and Hindu Identity in Essex. In *Religion and Ethnicity: Minorities and Social Change in the Metropolis* (ed.) R. Barot. Netherlands: Pharos.

Kapadia, K. M. 1955. *Marriage and family in India.* Delhi: Manohar Publications.

Kart, C.S. The End of Conventional Gerontology. *Sociology of Health and Illness.* **9**, 76-87.

Kaur, S and Kaur, M. 1987. Psyco-social Problems of the Aged. In *Aging In India* (eds). M.L Sharma and T.M.Dak. Delhi: Ajanta Publications.

Kelly, E. 1990. Transcontinental families - Gujarat and Lancashire: a comparative study of social policy. In *South Asians Overseas: Migration and Ethnicity* (eds). C Clarke, C. Peach and S Vertovec. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kent, D. 1971. The Elderly in Minority Groups. *The Gerontologist.* **11**, 26-9.

Khan, V.S. (ed.) 1979. *Minority Families in Britain: support and stress.* London: Macmillan Publications.

_____ 1980. Asian women in Britain: Strategies of adjustment of Indian and Pakistani migrants. In *The Ageing in India.* (ed.) A. De-Souza. Delhi: Manohar Publications.

Khera, A. 1985. "Punjabi Elderlies in Southall and their English language needs". M.A Dissertation (unpublished).

Koenig, H.G. 1992. *Successful Ageing: Religion and Mental Health.* New York: haworth Press.

_____ 1993. Religion and Ageing. *Reviews in Clinical Gerontology*. **3**, 195-203.

Krausz, E. 1971. *Ethnic Minorities in Britain*. London: McGibbon and Kee.

Kuppuswamy, B. 1977. *Dharma and Society: A study of social values*. Madras: MacMillan Co. of India Ltd.

Laing, R.D. 1960. *The Divided Self*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Laslett,B and Rapoport, R. 1975. Collaborative interviewing and interactive research. *Journal of Marriage and the family*. **37**, 968-77.

Laslett, P. 1984. The Significance of the Past in the Study of Ageing. *Ageing and Society*. **4**, 379-89.

_____ 1989. *A Fresh Map of Life*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Leech, K. 1977. *Soul Friend: A study of Spirituality*. London: Sheldon.

Leiberman, M.A and Tobin, S. S. 1983. *The Experience of Old Age: stress, coping and survival*. New York: Basic Books.

Lewis, C. 1971. Reminiscing and self-concept in old age. *Journal of Gerontology*. **26**, 240-43.

Lynch, J. 1989. *Multicultural Education in a Global Society*. London: Falmer.

Lyon, M. H. 1972-73. Ethnicity in Britain. *New Community*. **2**, 1-11.

Mayer, A. C. 1967. Introduction. In *Caste in Overseas Indian communities* (ed.) B.M. Schwartz. California: Chandler Publishing Company.

McDonald, A. 1993. "Caring Women: Gender, Power and ritual in Gujarati Households in East London". Ph.D Thesis. School Of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

McGregor, R.S. 1977. *Outline of Hindi Grammar: With exercises*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

_____ (ed.) 1993. *Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary*. London: Oxford University Press.

McKinnon, C.A. 1979. *Sexual Harassment of Working Women: a case of sexual discrimination*. London: Tavistock Publications.

McMohan, A.W and Rudick, P.J. 1964. Reminiscing: Adaptational significance in the aged. *Archives of General Psychiatry*. **10**, 292-98.

Mehta, R. 1970. *The western-Educated Hindu Woman*. London: Asia Publishing House.

Mernissi, F. 1988. *Doing Daily Battles: Interviews with Moroccan women*. (Translated

by Jo Lakeland). London: Women's Press.

Michaelson, M. 1979. The relevance of caste among East African Gujaratis in Britain.*New Community*, **7**, 350-360.

_____ 1983. "Caste, Kinship and Marriage: a study of two Gujarati trading castes in England". Ph.D Thesis School of Oriental and Afrtican Studies, University of London.

_____ 1987. Domestic Hinduism in a Gujarati trading caste. In *Hinduism in Great Briatin* (ed.) R. Burghart. London: tavistock Publications.

Miles, R and Phizacklea, A. 1979. Some introductory observations on race and politics in Briatin. In *Racism and Political Action in Britain* (eds). R. Miles and A. Phizacklea. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Moore, H. L. 1988. *Feminism and Anthropology*. Cambridge: Polity.

Morris, H. S. 1967. Caste among the Indians in Uganda. In *Caste in Overseas Indian Communities* (ed.) B.M Schwartz. California: Chandler Publishing Company.

Motwani, K. 1958. *Manu Dharma Sastra: a sociological and historical study*. Delhi: Manohar Publications.

Myerhoff, B.G. 1978. *Number Our Days*. New York: Dutton

_____ and Simic, A. (eds). 1978. *Life's Career-aging: cultural variations in growing old*. California: Sage Publications.

Nagata, J. A. 1974. What is a Malay? : situational selection of ethnic identities in a plural society. *American Ethnologist*. **1**, 331-350.

Nash, M. 1989. *The Cauldron of Ethnicity in the Modern World*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

National Urban League. 1964. *Double Jeopardy, the older Negro in America Today*. New York, National Urban League.

Neugarten, B. L. 1969. Continuities and discontinuities of psychological issues into adult life. *Human Development*. **12**, 121-130.

_____ and Hagestad, G.O. 1976. Age and the Life Course. In *Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences* (eds). R. Binstock and E. Shanas. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Norman, A. 1985. Triple Jeopardy: growing old in a second homeland. *Policy Studies in Ageing*. **3**. London: Centre for Policy on Ageing.

Oakley, A. 1981. Interviewing women: a contradiction in terms. In *Doing Feminist Research* (ed.) H. Roberts. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Ortner, S. B. 1974. Is female to male as nature is to culture?. In *Woman, Culture and Society* (eds). M.Z Rolsaldo and L. Lamphere. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Ortner, S. B and Whitehead, H. (eds). 1981. *Sexual Meanings: The cultural construction of gender and sexuality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Palmore, E and Manton, K. 1974. Modernization and the status of the aged. *Journal of Gerontology*. **29**, 205-10.

Parekh, B. 1986. Racism and Anti-racism: A Study in the contradictory profile of the British State. In The XIth world Congress of Sociology, Research Committee on Ethnic, Race and Minority Relations. New Delhi.

Park, R. 1950. *Race and Culture*. Glencoe: The Free Press.

Parker, S. 1982. *Work and Retirement*. London: Allen and Unwin.

Parmar, P. 1982. Gender, race and class: Asian women in resistance. In *The Empire Strikes Back*. Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham. London and New York: Hutchinson Publications.

Parry,J. 1985. The Brahmanical tradition and the technology of the intellect. In *Reason and Morality* (ed.) J. Overing. London: Tavistock publications.

Patterson, O. 1982. The nature, causes, and implications of ethnic identification. In *Minorities: Community and Identity* (ed.) C. Fried. Berlin, New York and Tokyo: Springer-verlag.

Patel, N. 1990. A `Race' Against Time?: Social services provision to black elders. *Race and Policy Series*. 1. London: Runnymede Trust.

Pettigrew, J. 1972. Some notes on the social system of Sikh Jats. *New Community*. **1**, 355-365.

Peggie, A.C.W. 1979. Minority Youth Politics in Southall. *New Community*. **7**, 170-77.

Phizacklea, A. (ed.) 1983. *One Way Ticket: Migration and Female Labour*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Picklay, A.S. 1940. *History of the Ishmailis*. Bombay: Popular Printing Press.

Pocock, D. F. 1957. `Difference' in East Africa: A Study of Caste and Religion in Modern Indian Society. *South Western Journal of Anthropology*. **13**, 289-300.

Radcliffe Brown, A. R. 1952. *Structure and Function in Primitive Societies*. London: Cohen and West Ltd.

Raj, B and Prasad, B.G. 1971. A Study of Rural Aged Persons in Social Profile. *Indian Journal of Social Work*. **32**, 155-62.

Rex, J. 1983. *Race Relations In Sociological Theory*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

_____ 1986. *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Romijn, J. 1976.*TABU Ugandan Asians: the old, the weak, the vulnerable*. London: London Council of Social Services.

Rosaldo, M.Z and Lamphere, L (eds). 1974. *Woman, Culture and Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Rosow, I. 1965. And then we are old. In *Trans-action*, **2**, 20-26.

_____ 1976. Status and role chage through the life span. In *Handbook of Aging and the Social sciences* (eds). R. Binstock and E. Shanas. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Ross, A. 1961. *Household and family in India*. Delhi: Ajanta Publications.

Royce, A. P. 1982. *Ethnic Identity: Strategies of Diversity*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Saada, J.F. 1980. *Deadly Words*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Said, E. 1978. *Orientalism*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Scivyer, K. 1984. ASRA: Meeting the Needs of Elderly Asians. *Design for Special Needs*. **33**, 9-11.

Seabrook, J. 1971. *City Close-Up*. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books.

Sedley, A and Benn, M. 1982. *Sexual Harassment at Work*. London: NCCL Publications

Sinclair, K. P. 1985. Koro and Kuia: aging and gender among the Maori of New Zealand. In *Aging and its Transformations* (eds). A.C. Counts and D.R. Counts. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii.

Shan, S. 1986. *In My Own Name: An Autobiography*. London: Tavistock Publications.

Shanas, Townsend, P. et al. (eds). 1968. *Old People in Three Industrial societies*. New York: Atherton Press.

Sharma, M. L and Dak, T. M. (eds). 1987. *Aging in India*. Delhi: Ajanta Publications.

Sharma, U. 1986. *Women's work, Class and the Urban Household: a study of Shimla, North India*. London: Tavistock Publications.

_____ 1980. *Women, Work and Property in North India*. London: Tavistock Publications.

_____ 1971. *Rampal and His Family*. London: Collins.

Singh, S. 1979. *Sikh Religion: Democratic Ideals And Institutions*. Delhi: Oriental publishers.

Stone (ed.) 1977. *Race, Ethnicity and Sociology*. N. Scituate: Duxbury Press.

Spencer, P. (ed.) 1990. The riddled course: theories of age and its transformations. In

Anthropology and the Riddle of the Sphinx: youth, maturation and ageing. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Tambs-Lyche, H. 1974. A Comparison Of Gujarati communities in London and the Midlands. In *New Community*. **4**, 349-55.

_____ 1980. *London Patidars*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Taylor, J. H. 1979. *The Half-Way Generation: A study of Asian youths in Newcastle upon Tyne*. New Jersey: NFER publishing Co.Ltd.

Thomas, R. 1986. Indian Cinema: Pleasures and Popularity. *Screen*. 116-131.

Thompson, M. 1974. The second generation: Punjabi or English?. *New Community*. **3**, 242-28.

Tilak, S. 1989. *Religion and Ageing in the Indian Tradition*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Twaddle, M. 1990. East African Asians through a hundred years. In *South Asians Overseas: Migration and Ethnicity* (eds). C. Clarke, C. Peach and S. Vertovec. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Uberoi, N. 1964. Sikh women in Southall. *Race*. **6**, 34-40.

Van Arsdale, P.W. 1981. The Elderly Asmat of New Guinea. In *Other Ways of Growing Old* (eds). P.T. Amoss and S. Harrell. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Vatuk, S. 1975. The ageing women in India. In De-Souza A. *Women in Contemporary India and South Asia*. Delhi: Manohar Publications.

_____ 1982. The family life of older people in a changing society: India. In *Aging and the Aged in the Thirld World, Part II: regional and ethnographic perspectives (= Studies in Thirld World Societies)* (eds). J Sokolovosky and J. Sokolovosky. Virginia: College of William and Mary.

_____ 1987. Authority, Power and Autonomy in the Life Cycle of the North Indian Woman. In *Dimensions of Social Life* (ed.) P.Hockings. Berlin: Mouton.

_____ 1990a. Old Age in India. In *Old Age in Pre-Industrail Society* (ed.) N. Stearns. New York: Holmes and Meier.

_____ 1990b. To be a burden on others: Dependency anxiety among the elderly in India. In *Divine Passions: The social construction of emotion in India* (ed.) O.M Lynch. Oxford: University of California Press Ltd.

Vertovec, S. 1991. "Community and Congregation in London Hindu Temples: divergent trends". Fifth Annual Conference, British Association for South Asian Studies. School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

Visram. R. 1986. *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: Indians in Britain, 1700-1947*. London: Pluto Press.

Wadley, S. 1977. Women and the Hindu tradition. In *Women in India: Two Perspectives*. Jacobson and S Wadley. Delhi: Manohar publications.

Wallman, S. 1978. Race relations or ethnic relations. In *New Community*. 6, 306-9.

Warrier, S. 1988. Marriage, maternity and female economic activity: Gujarati mothers in Britain. In *Enterprising Women* (eds). S. Westwood and P. Bhachu. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Watson. J. L. (ed.) 1977. *Between Two Cultures: Minorities in Briatin*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Werbner, P. 1987. Barefoot in Britain: Anthropological research on Asian immigrants. *New Community*. **14**, 176-81.

Westwood, S. 1988. Workers and wives: continuities and discontinuities in the lives of Gujarati women. In *Enterprising Women* (eds). S.Westwood and P.Bhachu. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

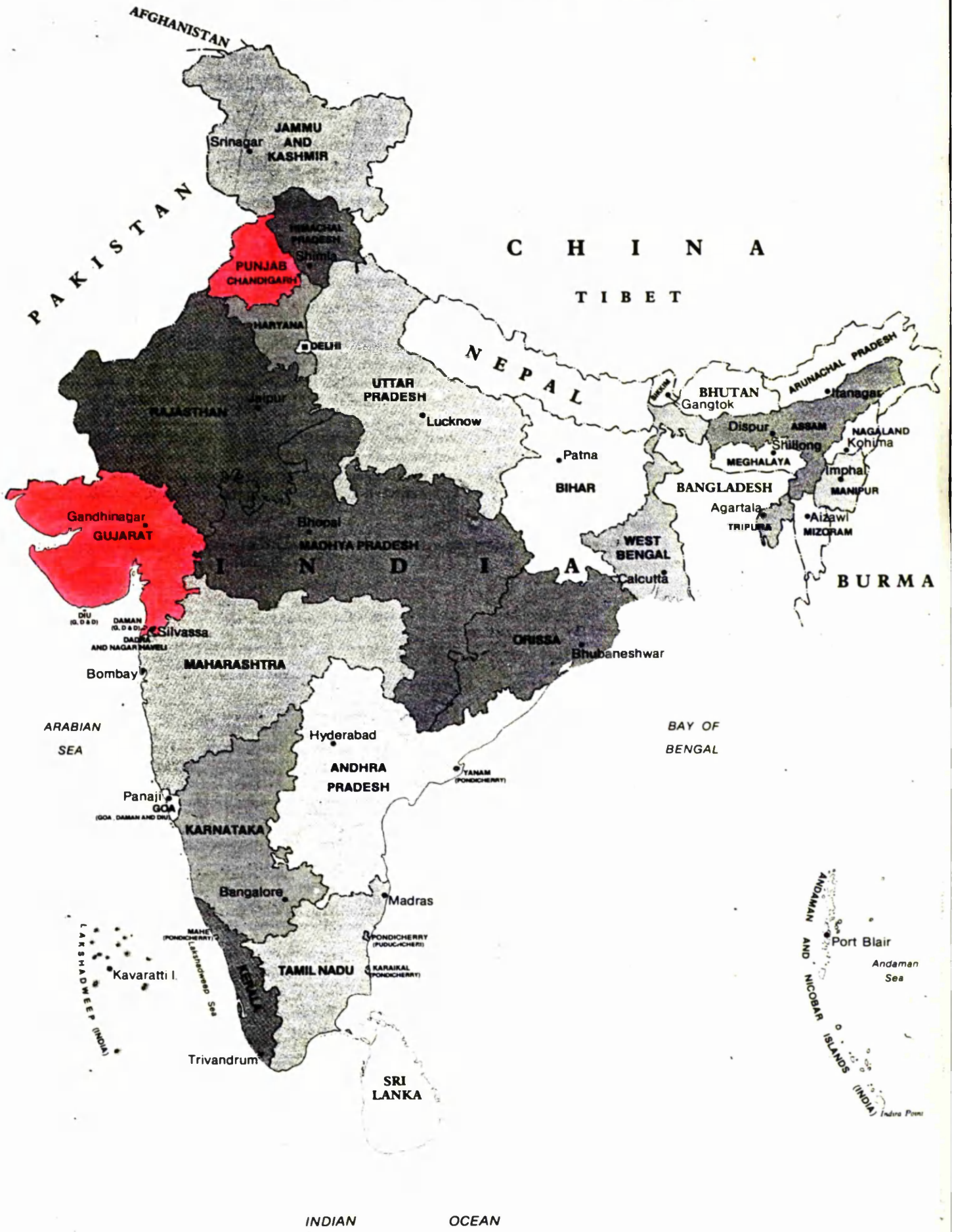
Wilson, A. 1978.*Finding a Voice: Asian Women in Britain*. London: Virago Publications.

Wright, P.L. 1968. *The Coloured Worker in British Industry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

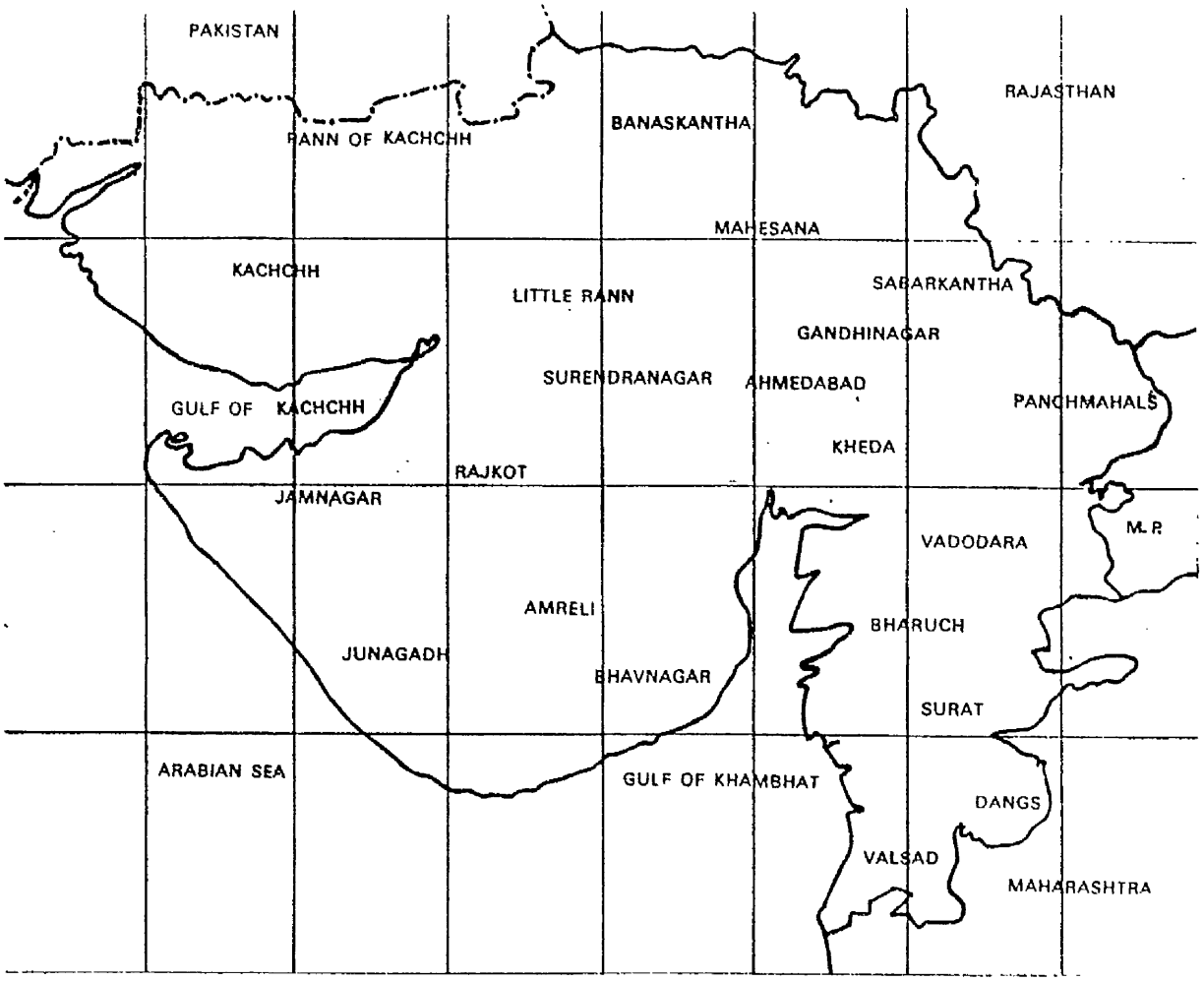
Yates, P. 1990. Enterprising life texts and negotiating life courses: youth, ethnicity and culture. In *Anthropology and the Riddle of the Sphinx: youth, maturation and ageing* (ed.) P. Spencer. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Young, K. Wolkowitz, C. and McCullagh, R. (eds). 1981. *Of Marriage and the Market: Women's subordination internationally nad its lessons*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

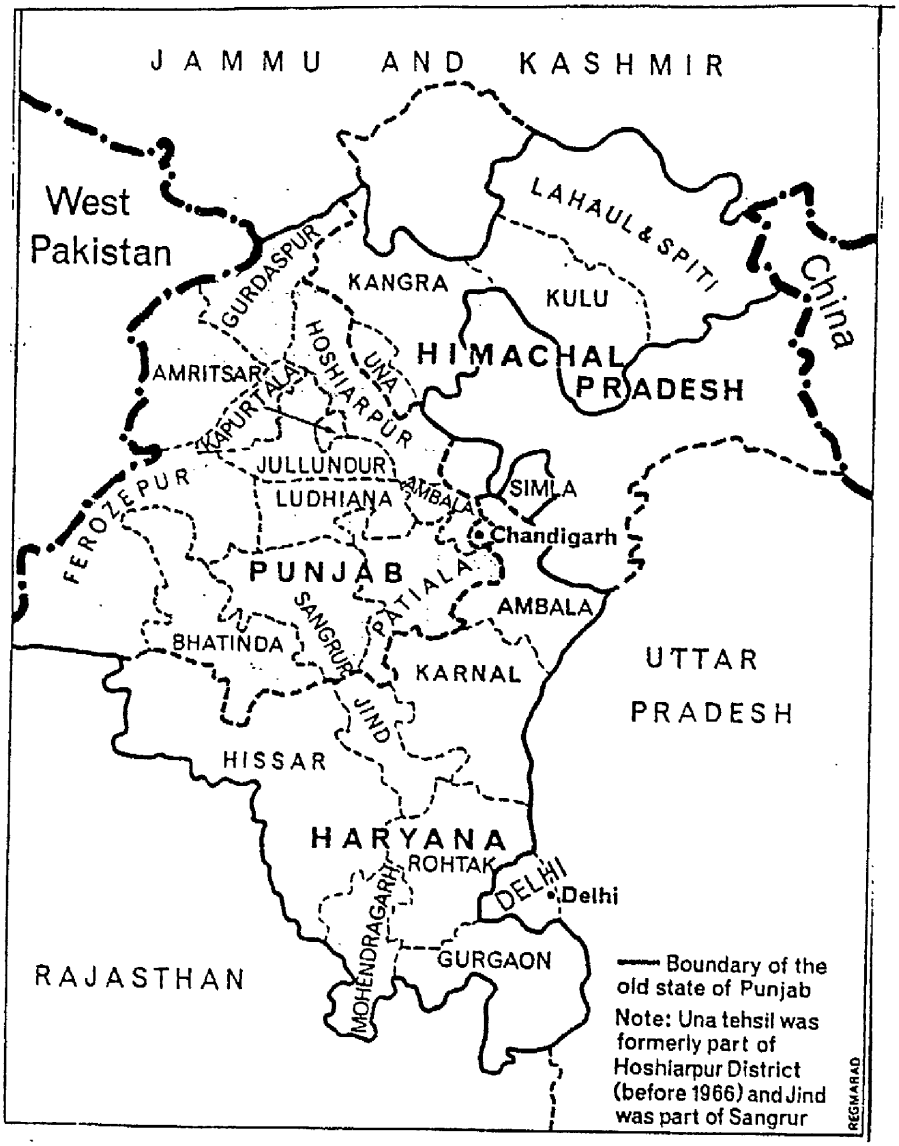
APPENDIX A Map of India (Showing Gujarat & Punjab)



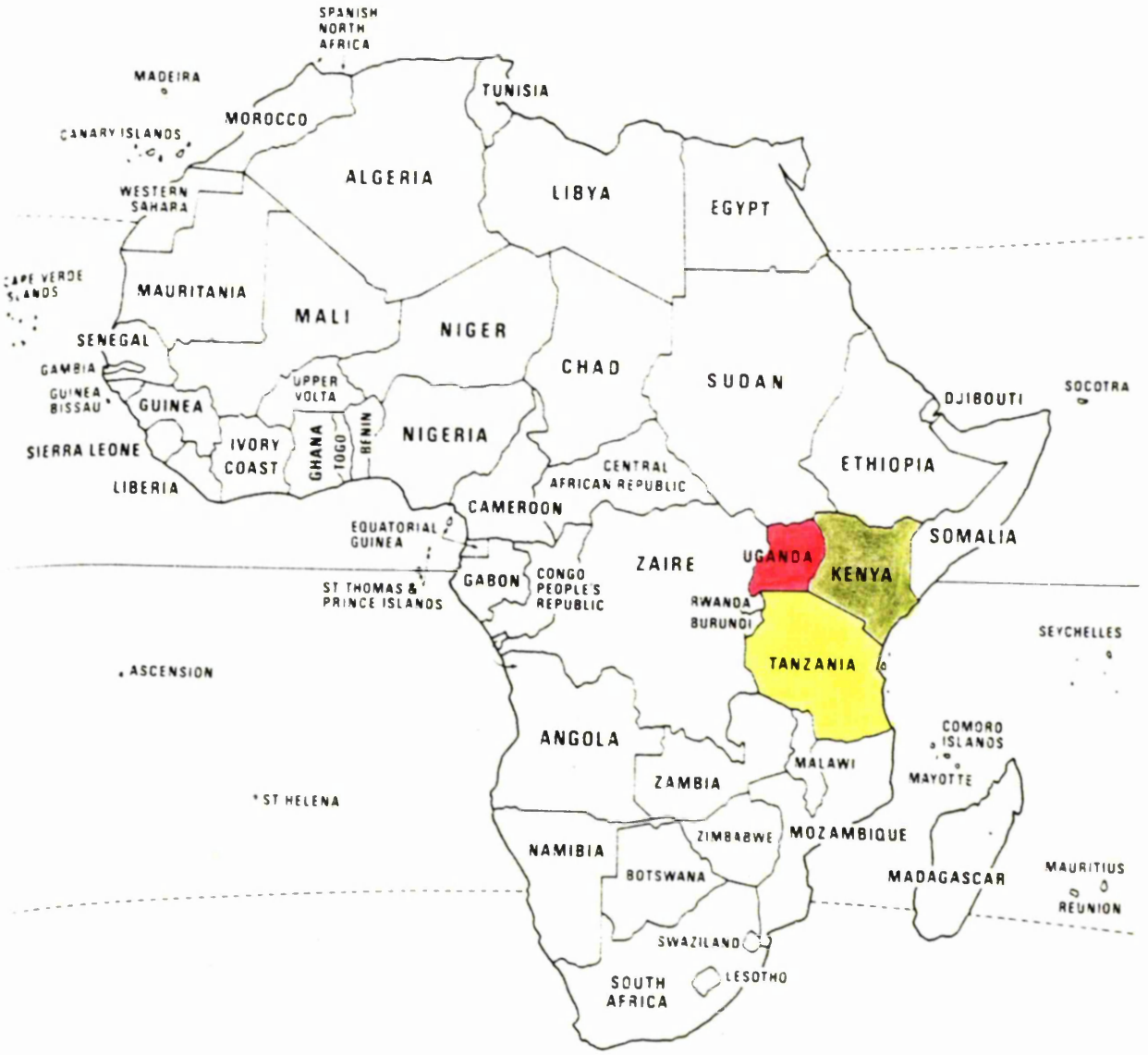
APPENDIX B Map of Gujarat



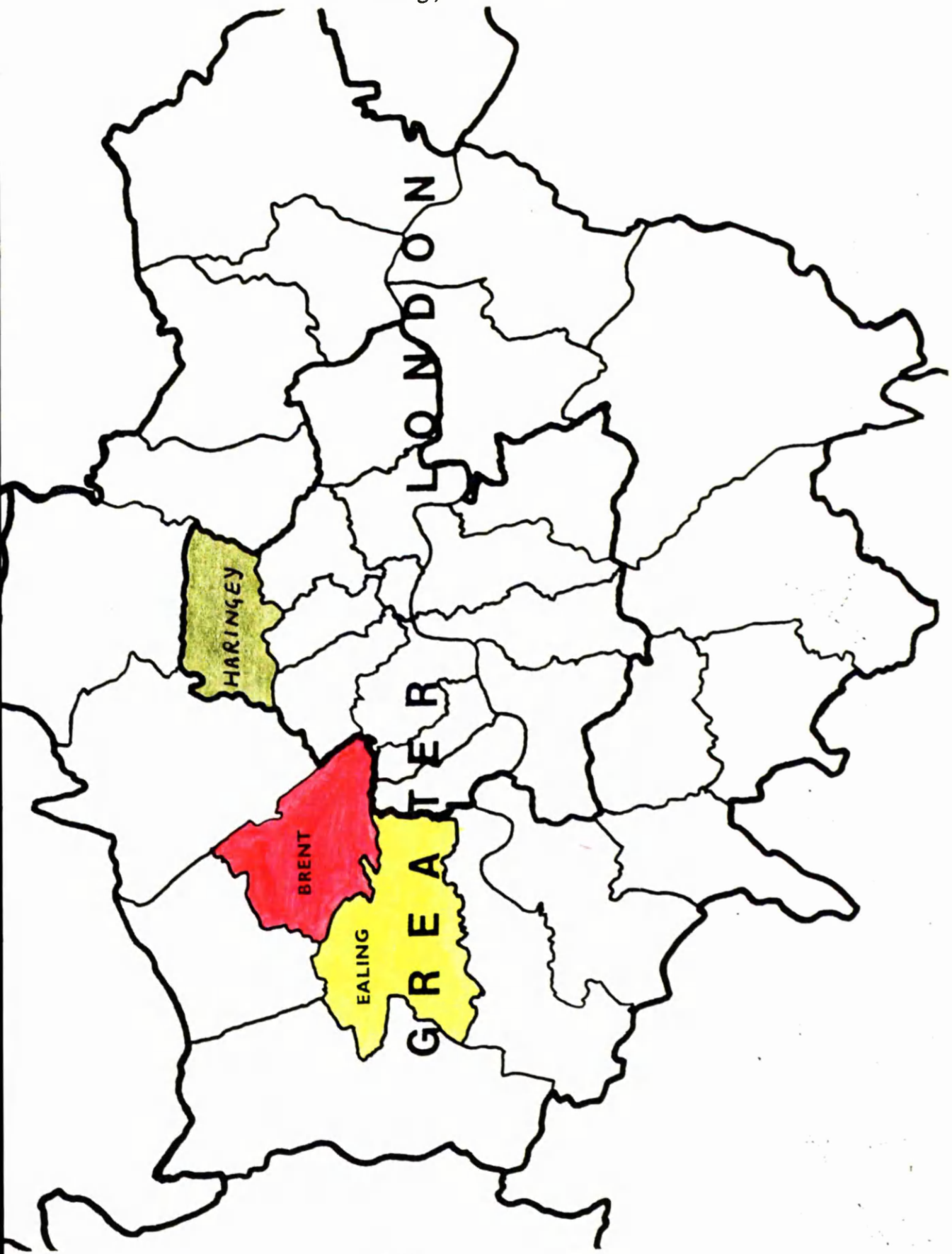
APPENDIX C Map of Punjab



APPENDIX D Map of Africa (Showing Uganda, Kenya & Tanzania)



APPENDIX E Map of Greater London (Showing Boroughs of Haringey , Brent & Ealing)



Population present 1971 - 91

Notes: (1) All figures relate to the areas as constituted at 21 April 1991.
(2) Changes since 1981 are denoted by:
* boundary
† name
# denotes that the district has been granted borough status.
(3) § Based on preliminary counts (rounded to the nearest hundred) - see notes.

Area	Population present							Intercensal increase or decrease (-)		
	1971	1981 §			1991			Amount §	Per cent per year	
	Total persons	Total persons	Males	Females	Total persons	Males	Females	1981 - 1991	1971 - 1981	1981 - 1991
GREATER LONDON	**7,452,520**	**6,696,200**	**3,218,300**	**3,477,800**	**6,393,568**	**3,064,314**	**3,329,254**	**- 302,600**	**- 1.07**	**- 0.46**
Outer London *	**4,420,585**	**4,199,400**	**2,022,700**	**2,176,700**	**4,050,435**	**1,947,189**	**2,103,246**	**- 149,000**	**- 0.51**	**- 0.36**
Inner London	**3,031,935**	**2,496,800**	**1,195,600**	**1,301,100**	**2,343,133**	**1,117,125**	**1,226,008**	**- 153,600**	**- 1.93**	**- 0.63**
City of London	4,245	5,900	3,000	2,900	4,230	2,189	2,041	1,700	3.35	3 25
Inner London boroughs										
Camden	206,737	171,600	79,900	91,600	165,274	77,695	87,579	- 6,300	- 1.86	- 0 37
Hackney	220,279	180,200	86,800	93,500	162,772	77,817	84,955	- 17,500	- 2.00	1.01
Hammersmith & Fulham	187,195	148,100	70,600	77,500	137,720	64,442	73,278	10,300	- 2.33	0.72
Haringey	240,078	203,200	98,000	105,200	186,490	89,654	96,836	- 16,700	- 1.66	0 85
Islington	201,874	159,800	77,100	82,700	154,873	73,373	81,500	- 4,900	2.33	0.31
Kensington & Chelsea	188,227	138,800	64,300	74,500	126,285	59,130	67,155	- 12,500	- 3.02	- 0.93
Lambeth	307,516	245,700	117,900	127,800	220,252	104,990	115,262	- 25,500	- 2.23	- 1.08
Lewisham	268,474	233,200	111,000	122,300	215,483	101,467	114,016	- 17,700	- 1.41	- 0.78
Newham	237,390	209,300	102,400	106,900	200,678	98,119	102,559	- 8,600	- 1.26	- 0 42
Southwark	262,138	211,700	101,000	110,700	198,916	94,338	104,578	- 12,800	- 2.13	- 0.62
Tower Hamlets	165,776	143,000	70,900	72,100	153,255	75,284	77,971	10,300	- 1.48	0.69
Wandsworth	302,258	255,700	121,700	134,000	239,162	112,594	126,568	- 16,600	- 1 67	- 0 66
Westminster, City of	239,748	190,700	91,200	99,500	177,743	86,033	91,710	- 12,900	- 2.28	- 0.70
Outer London boroughs										
Barking & Dagenham	160,800	150,200	72,100	78,000	140,728	67,448	73,280	- 9,400	- 0.69	0.65
Barnet	306,560	292,300	138,600	153,800	284,106	134,500	149,606	- 8,200	- 0.48	- 0.28
Bexley	217,076	214,800	104,500	110,300	211,404	102,148	109,256	- 3,400	- 0.11	- 0.16
Brent	280,657	251,300	122,500	128,700	227,903	110,597	117,306	- 23,400	- 1.11	- 0 97
Bromley	305,377	294,500	141,000	153,500	282,920	134,775	148,145	- 11,500	- 0.37	0.40
Croydon	333,870	316,600	152,200	164,400	301,904	145,059	156,845	- 14,700	- 0.53	- 0 47
Ealing	301,108	280,000	136,600	143,400	264,867	128,072	136,795	- 15,200	- 0.73	- 0.55
Enfield	268,004	258,800	124,400	134,400	250,750	120,404	130,346	8,100	- 0.35	- 0.32
Greenwich	217,664	211,800	101,800	110,000	201,545	96,171	105,374	- 10,300	- 0.27	0.49
Harrow	203,215	196,000	93,900	102,100	194,893	93,852	101,041	1,100	0.36	0.06
Havering	247,696	240,300	117,400	122,900	225,144	108,961	116,183	15,200	- 0 30	0 65
Hillingdon *	235,062	229,400	112,500	116,900	228,476	111,751	116,725	- 900	- 0.25	0 04
Hounslow	206,956	199,800	97,300	102,500	196,502	96,102	100,500	3,200	- 0.35	0.16
Kingston upon Thames	140,525	132,400	63,200	69,300	131,436	63,327	68,109	1,000	0.60	0.07
Merton	177,324	164,900	78,500	86,400	162,741	77,793	84,948	2,200	- 0.73	0 13
Redbridge	239,889	225,000	108,300	116,700	221,107	106,494	114,613	3,900	- 0.64	- 0.17
Richmond upon Thames	174,628	157,900	74,700	83,200	155,698	73,586	82,112	2,200	1 01	0 14
Sutton	169,494	168,400	79,900	88,500	164,868	78,525	86,343	3,500	- 0.06	0 21
Waltham Forest	234,680	215,100	103,400	111,700	203,343	97,624	105,719	11,700	0.87	0.56

SOURCE: 1991 CENSUS, OFFICE OF POPULATION CENSUSES & SURVEYS, LONDON: HMSO

APPENDIX G

SOURCE: 1981 CENSUS, OFFICE OF POPULATION CENSUSES & SURVEYS, LONDON: HMSO

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

(A) MEN AGED 16–64

Area	Population (000s)	Economically active (as a % of population)			Economically inactive (as a % of population*)
		All	In employment	Out of employment	
	a	b	c	d	e
GREAT BRITAIN	**16,774.0**	**90.4**	**79.9**	**10.5**	**9.6**
ENGLAND AND WALES	**15,216.7**	**90.4**	**80.1**	**10.2**	**9.6**
ENGLAND	**14,365.1**	**90.5**	**80.5**	**10.0**	**9.5**
SOUTH EAST REGION	**5,231.8**	**90.8**	**83.0**	**7.8**	**9.2**
Greater London	**2,118.6**	**90.4**	**81.0**	**9.3**	**9.6**
Inner London	**789.3**	**89.0**	**76.2**	**12.8**	**11.0**
City of London	2.0	93.2	85.0	8.2	6.8
Camden	53.3	87.9	75.7	12.2	12.1
Hackney	56.2	88.0	72.0	16.1	12.0
Hammersmith and Fulham	48.1	88.8	76.6	12.1	11.2
Haringey	66.7	88.4	77.3	11.1	11.6
Islington	52.1	89.3	75.1	14.1	10.7
Kensington and Chelsea	42.9	86.1	75.8	10.4	13.9
Lambeth	80.0	88.6	74.9	13.7	11.4
Lewisham	72.7	90.6	79.2	11.4	9.4
Newham	66.3	90.7	77.3	13.3	9.3
Southwark	66.4	90.4	76.0	14.4	9.6
Tower Hamlets	46.0	90.7	73.3	17.4	9.3
Wandsworth	81.0	88.7	77.8	10.8	11.3
Westminster, City of	55.4	87.3	76.6	10.8	12.7
Outer London	**1,329.4**	**91.2**	**83.9**	**7.3**	**8.8**
Barking and Dagenham	46.0	93.0	82.0	11.0	7.0
Barnet	90.0	88.8	82.4	6.4	11.2
Bexley	68.4	92.5	86.3	6.3	7.5
Brent	82.8	88.5	78.4	10.1	11.5
Bromley	93.6	90.8	85.1	5.7	9.2
Croydon	101.6	91.1	84.5	6.6	8.9
Ealing	91.0	90.5	81.8	8.7	9.5
Enfield	80.6	91.6	84.2	7.4	8.4
Greenwich	65.3	91.6	80.7	10.9	8.4
Harrow	61.3	91.0	85.6	5.5	9.0
Havering	78.4	92.8	86.0	6.8	7.2
Hillingdon	73.7	92.7	86.7	6.0	7.3
Hounslow	64.9	91.8	84.4	7.4	8.2
Kingston upon Thames	41.2	91.5	86.2	5.3	8.5
Merton	51.7	90.9	84.4	6.5	9.1
Redbridge	71.4	90.8	83.8	6.9	9.2
Richmond upon Thames	49.7	90.7	85.1	5.5	9.3
Sutton	52.1	92.2	87.2	5.1	7.8
Waltham Forest	65.7	91.8	82.1	9.7	8.2

(B) MARRIED WOMEN AGED 16–59

Area	Population (000s)	Economically active (as a % of population)			Economically inactive (as a % of population*)	Percentage of employed working part-time
		All	In employment	Out of employment		
	a	b	c	d	e	f
GREAT BRITAIN	**10,513.9**	**56.9**	**54.2**	**2.7**	**43.1**	**50.2**
ENGLAND AND WALES	**9,526.6**	**56.9**	**54.3**	**2.6**	**43.1**	**50.5**
ENGLAND	**8,985.3**	**57.2**	**54.7**	**2.5**	**42.8**	**50.8**
SOUTH EAST REGION	**3,196.8**	**57.5**	**55.4**	**2.1**	**42.5**	**49.0**
Greater London	**1,188.8**	**59.5**	**57.0**	**2.5**	**40.5**	**44.0**
Inner London	**385.0**	**59.6**	**56.3**	**3.3**	**40.4**	**39.8**
City of London	0.7	68.4	64.3	4.1	31.6	22.0
Camden	22.8	59.5	55.8	3.8	40.5	36.5
Hackney	27.8	56.5	52.5	4.0	43.5	39.5
Hammersmith and Fulham	20.9	62.2	58.8	3.4	37.8	37.6
Haringey	34.3	60.5	57.2	3.3	39.5	36.5
Islington	24.9	61.0	57.5	3.6	39.0	38.9
Kensington and Chelsea	17.4	52.5	49.0	3.5	47.5	32.7
Lambeth	37.1	63.1	59.8	3.4	36.9	38.0
Lewisham	40.0	62.6	60.2	2.4	37.4	45.0
Newham	38.4	54.4	50.8	3.6	45.6	40.5
Southwark	34.8	61.8	58.9	2.9	38.2	44.9
Tower Hamlets	22.8	54.0	50.5	3.5	46.0	46.1
Wandsworth	40.2	62.7	59.9	2.8	37.3	41.0
Westminster, City of	22.8	57.4	54.0	3.4	42.6	32.9
Outer London	**803.9**	**59.5**	**57.3**	**2.2**	**40.5**	**46.0**
Barking and Dagenham	28.8	53.4	51.2	2.2	46.6	52.0
Barnet	52.9	56.4	54.4	2.0	43.6	45.5
Bexley	45.0	58.7	57.2	1.5	41.3	47.7
Brent	43.9	61.9	57.9	4.0	38.1	36.0
Bromley	58.6	58.3	56.9	1.4	41.7	49.9
Croydon	61.4	60.5	58.8	1.7	39.5	45.0
Ealing	51.2	63.4	59.6	3.7	36.6	37.0
Enfield	50.3	59.9	58.0	1.9	40.1	48.9
Greenwich	39.1	59.3	56.9	2.5	40.7	47.7
Harrow	38.2	59.3	57.1	2.2	40.7	46.2
Havering	51.5	55.3	53.7	1.6	44.7	51.2
Hillingdon	45.8	62.3	60.2	2.1	37.7	49.6
Hounslow	37.6	62.6	59.6	3.0	37.4	41.3
Kingston upon Thames	24.9	60.6	58.8	1.8	39.4	47.3
Merton	30.7	60.7	58.7	1.9	39.3	45.1
Redbridge	43.7	57.9	55.9	2.0	42.1	45.7
Richmond upon Thames	27.9	60.2	58.3	1.9	39.8	44.1
Sutton	32.9	59.9	58.6	1.4	40.1	49.7
Waltham Forest	39.3	59.0	56.5	2.5	41.0	47.4

(C) SINGLE, WIDOWED OR DIVORCED WOMEN AGED 16–59

Area	Population (000s)	Economically active (as a % of population)			Economically inactive (as a % of population*)	Percentage of employed working part-time
		All	In employment	Out of employment		
	a	b	c	d	e	f
GREAT BRITAIN	**4,869.9**	**69.5**	**60.5**	**9.0**	**30.5**	**11.9**
ENGLAND AND WALES	**4,393.7**	**69.3**	**60.5**	**8.8**	**30.7**	**12.2**
ENGLAND	**4,160.4**	**69.6**	**60.9**	**8.7**	**30.4**	**12.1**
SOUTH EAST REGION	**1,645.3**	**71.4**	**64.3**	**7.1**	**28.6**	**10.9**
Greater London	**799.5**	**74.3**	**66.6**	**7.7**	**25.7**	**9.4**
Inner London	**364.1**	**75.4**	**65.9**	**9.4**	**24.6**	**9.4**
City of London	1.0	90.2	86.9	3.3	9.8	2.7
Camden	30.3	77.6	69.3	8.3	22.4	9.5
Hackney	25.3	71.8	59.5	12.3	28.2	10.7
Hammersmith and Fulham	24.8	79.3	70.8	8.5	20.7	8.6
Haringey	28.4	73.2	64.2	9.0	26.8	9.0
Islington	24.1	75.3	65.2	10.1	24.7	10.0
Kensington and Chelsea	27.6	77.7	69.7	8.0	22.3	9.6
Lambeth	38.3	74.6	64.0	10.6	25.4	9.6
Lewisham	28.7	74.1	65.2	8.9	25.9	9.7
Newham	22.1	72.0	61.2	10.8	28.0	8.9
Southwark	28.0	73.8	63.8	10.0	26.2	10.6
Tower Hamlets	17.6	74.1	62.7	11.4	25.9	9.6
Wandsworth	36.2	75.6	67.2	8.4	24.4	9.5
Westminster, City of	31.8	79.0	70.9	8.1	21.0	8.2
Outer London	**435.3**	**73.4**	**67.1**	**6.3**	**26.6**	**9.4**
Barking and Dagenham	13.7	74.0	65.5	8.5	26.0	10.6
Barnet	33.7	71.0	65.4	5.6	29.0	10.7
Bexley	18.5	72.8	67.4	5.4	27.2	8.9
Brent	33.1	72.7	63.9	8.8	27.3	8.1
Bromley	29.0	71.9	66.8	5.0	28.1	9.4
Croydon	33.9	72.6	66.8	5.9	27.4	9.5
Ealing	32.6	74.2	66.8	7.3	25.8	8.2
Enfield	24.4	72.9	67.1	5.8	27.1	10.0
Greenwich	22.3	72.8	64.9	7.9	27.2	9.8
Harrow	19.5	72.1	67.0	5.0	27.9	9.0
Havering	21.0	73.6	67.8	5.8	26.4	9.0
Hillingdon	21.3	73.9	68.4	5.6	26.1	9.8
Hounslow	21.8	75.1	69.1	6.0	24.9	9.2
Kingston upon Thames	13.5	74.9	70.1	4.8	25.1	9.9
Merton	17.6	75.5	69.7	5.7	24.5	9.8
Redbridge	22.3	73.5	67.1	6.4	26.5	8.8
Richmond upon Thames	19.1	75.2	69.7	5.5	24.8	10.3
Sutton	16.5	74.7	70.4	4.3	25.3	9.9
Waltham Forest	21.5	74.3	66.1	8.2	25.7	9.6

APPENDIX H

Geographical distribution of London's ethnic population by borough and birthplace of head of household. 1981.

	New Commonwealth and Pakistan									% of
	Carib bean	East Afr- ica	NC Asia				Medit- erran- ean	Rest NCWP	All NCWP	All birth- places
			India	Bangl adesh	Pakis tan	NC Asia				
City of London	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Camden	1.0	1.1	1.2	5.4	1.1	1.6	2.8	3.2	1.7	2.3
Kensington & C	1.2	0.8	0.8	1.0	1.0	0.8	0.8	2.5	1.2	1.8
Westminster	2.4	0.9	1.1	4.0	1.2	1.4	1.4	3.7	2.0	2.3
Central boroughs	4.7	2.9	3.1	10.5	3.3	3.8	5.0	9.4	4.9	7.0
Hackney	8.7	1.0	2.5	4.6	2.6	2.7	6.3	5.0	5.2	2.7
Hammersmith & F	3.7	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.8	1.3	1.3	2.7	2.3	2.2
Haringey	7.2	2.7	2.5	3.6	1.8	2.5	17.1	6.4	6.3	3.1
Islington	3.0	0.9	0.8	3.0	0.8	1.0	7.0	3.9	2.8	2.4
Lambeth	10.6	2.8	2.2	2.5	2.5	2.3	3.9	7.5	5.9	3.7
Lewisham	6.9	1.0	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.1	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.5
Newham	5.1	5.8	8.9	2.6	13.5	9.1	1.7	3.8	5.9	3.2
Southwark	6.1	1.1	0.9	3.2	1.1	5.2	5.0	3.9	3.6	3.2
Tower Hamlets	2.1	0.5	0.8	43.6	1.8	5.1	2.7	1.8	2.9	2.1
Wandsworth	6.7	4.8	3.3	2.9	4.6	3.5	2.1	6.6	5.2	3.8
Rest of Inner	60.1	2.17	24.3	68.3	31.5	29.7	50.7	45.3	43.5	29.3
Inner boroughs	64.8	24.6	27.3	78.8	34.8	33.5	55.6	54.7	48.4	36.3
Barking & D	0.3	0.4	1.0	0.2	2.2	1.1	0.6	0.4	0.6	2.3
Barnet	1.0	7.8	5.0	1.6	2.6	4.3	6.5	4.6	3.9	4.4
Bexley	0.4	1.1	1.8	0.4	0.5	1.4	0.9	1.1	0.9	3.3
Brent	9.9	15.0	9.7	1.7	8.1	8.7	3.3	6.9	8.8	3.8
Bromley	0.8	1.0	1.4	0.7	0.6	1.2	1.1	1.5	1.1	4.5
Croydon	4.1	4.9	4.9	1.2	4.0	4.4	1.9	3.7	4.0	4.8
Ealing	4.3	9.6	15.4	1.7	9.0	13.0	1.8	4.7	7.4	4.2
Enfield	2.4	2.6	2.0	3.2	1.1	1.9	14.8	2.7	3.8	3.9
Greenwich	1.4	1.5	2.6	0.4	1.6	2.2	1.3	1.8	1.7	3.2
Harrow	1.3	10.6	4.6	1.0	2.5	3.9	1.4	2.2	3.1	3.0
Havering	0.4	0.6	0.9	0.4	0.5	0.8	0.6	0.7	0.6	3.7
Hillingdon	0.5	2.5	3.2	1.2	1.9	2.8	0.9	1.3	1.6	3.4
Hounslow	0.9	6.7	8.0	0.7	5.1	6.8	1.0	2.3	3.6	3.0
Kingston	0.2	1.2	1.0	0.3	0.9	0.9	0.6	1.4	0.7	2.0
Merton	1.5	2.1	2.1	1.6	2.6	2.2	1.1	2.4	1.8	2.5
Redbridge	1.2	4.1	4.3	1.4	4.7	4.1	2.0	2.0	2.6	3.4
Richmond	0.2	1.0	1.2	0.6	0.6	1.1	0.6	1.2	0.7	2.5
Sutton	0.4	0.8	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.6	1.1	0.7	2.5
Waltham Forest	4.2	1.9	2.5	2.5	16.0	4.8	3.2	3.3	3.9	3.3
Outer boroughs	35.2	75.4	72.7	21.2	65.2	66.5	44.4	54.3	51.6	63.7
Greater London	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Base ('000s)	306.8	90.7	223.7	28.9	52.2	304.7	112.0	130.9	945.1	6492

Source: 1981 Census, GLC Special Table DT 1286.

GLOSSARY

A

Ābhar	gratitude
Acchī	good, nice (feminine)
Ādarś	ideal
Adhārit	dependent
Āgyākārī	obedient
Ahsās	realisation
Ajīb	odd, abnormal
Akelāpan	loneliness
Akelī	alone
Ākhi	entire
Alag	separate, split
Ām	simple, ordinary
Amānat	gift, prized possession
Aṁgrez	English (person)
Aṁtar	difference
Apnānā	to own, possess, to adopt
Apne	self, own
Apśakun	inauspicious
Aṛ	stuck, take a stand
Arām	rest, leisure
Ārthik	economic
Asahāy	helpless, needy, dependent
Asar	affect
Āsrā	support, shelter
Āśram	stages (mode) of life
Āśramdharma	duties pertaining to the four stages of life
Āśrit	dependent
Āsro	refuge
Asthir	restless, unstable
Ātlī	so
Atma-sammān	self-respect
Aur	and
Aurat	woman

B

Bā	Mother
Bacānā	to save, protect
Badal/badlāyī	change
Bagṛelī	spoilt, tarnished, loose (feminine)
Bahan	sister
Bahan-pāṇī	(very close friend- like a sister)
Bāhar	outside
Bahu	daughter-in-law
Bahut	lots
Barābar	equal
Bardāśt	tolerance
Bāt-cīt	talk
Battar	worse

Becainī	restlesness, anxiety
Bekār	useless
Bekārī	idleness, unemployment
Ben	(short form for sister)
Beparvāh	careless, indifferent
Beparvāhī	carelesness, indifference
Beśaram	shameless, indecent
Bete	sons
Bhajan	religious song
Bhāṇvu	to mix, assimilate
Bharpūr	fulfilled
Bhed-bhāv	discrimination, bias
Bhegā	together
Bhī	also
Bhikāran	beggar (feminine)
Bhikārī	beggar
Bhugtān	compensate
Bījī	different
Bīmār	ill
Birādarī	community
Bojh	burden
Brahmacāriṅ	studenthood (first stage of life)
Burā/Bure	bad
Burā-bhalā	good and bad (uncomplementary)
Burāiyāṁ	bad habits
Būṛhī	old (woman)
Buzurg	old, aged

C

Cāhte	like, fond of, want
Cārā	option
Chokro	son
Chokrī	daughter
Cintā	worry
Cowkidār	watchman
Cup	quiet, meek
Chūlhā	hearth

D

Ḍākan	witch (who feeds on her people)
Dakhal	interference, impinge
Dān	gift, offering, alms
Ḍāndiyā	"stick" folk dance of Gujarat
Ḍar	fright, scare
Dard	pain
Dāyitva	responsibility
Deś	country (own)
Ḍhaṁg	style, manner
Dharma	religion, moral duty, righteousness "what holds together", the basis of all order
Dhārmik	religious
Dhīre	slow

Dhutkār	rebuke, rebuff
Dikhāyī	seen
Dikhāvatī	(in) appearance ("show-off")
Dīdhu	gave, offered
Dimāgī	mental
Din	day
Duḥkh	sadness, sorrow, misery, suffering
Duḥkhī	sad
Duḥkhtā	hurts
Dūje	other
Duniyāṅ	world
Dūrī	distance, separation

E

Ek	one
Eklāpan	loneliness
Eklī	alone, lonely (feminine)

F

Faydā	benefit
Fikr	worry

G

Garbā	folk dance of Gujarat
Gayā	gone
Gayī	gone (feminine)
Ghabrāvat	anxiety, agitation
Ghabrāyī	worry, scared (feminine)
Ghano	very, dense, much more
Ghar	home, house
Gharvālā	husband
Ghulnā	to mix, assimilate
Ghuṭan	suffocate
Gore	white (people)
Grahastha	householder (second stage of life)
Guru	Lord, God
Gussā	anger
Guzārā	manage (make-ends-meet), livelihood

H

Hairān	trouble
Hamārī	our
Haq	right (moral and legal)
Hār	defeat
Hargiz	not (dare)
Hāsil	achieve, gain
Hāth	hand
Himmat	courage
Hue	done
Hukūmat	rule, dominion, authority

Hum	we
Hone	to be
Hotā	happens

I

Ikkaṭṭhā	together
Insān	human
Itnī	so
Izzat	honour

J

Jaddo-jahad	struggle
Jagāh	place, position
Jaisī	like, alike, similar
Jamāī	son-in-law
Jamātkhānā	assembly house
Jawābdārī	responsibility
Jī	(used after a name as a mark of respect)
Jīvi	surviv
Joṛ	to stick, together
Judāī	separatness, discrimination
Jūnī/Jūno	old
Jyādā	lots, much (more)

K

Kā	belongs to
Kabzo	control, capture, in possession
Kālī	black (feminine)
Kām	work
kamiyāṁ	lacking, deficit
Kamīz	shirt
Kamzor	weak
Kanyā	virgin daughter
kar	do
Karā/karnā	to do
Karūṁ	should do
kathā	religious story
Khabo	shoulder
Khālīpan	emptiness, void
Khālī-samay	free-time
Khāndān	extended family
Khāniyāṁ	eats
Kharāb	spoilt, bad
Khaṛe	standing
Khasmo	husband
Khatā	annoyed
Khijāye	told-off
Khulā	open, loose
Khūn	blood
Khuśnasib	lucky
Khyāl	care, thought

Kīrtan	singing/reciting religious songs/verse
Koī	any
Kuc	anything
Kyoṁ	why

L

Lagnā/lagī	feel, hurt
Langar	communal kitchen
Laṛ	fight
Letī	takes
Liye	for
Logoṁ	people

M

Madad	help, support
Mahsūs	feel
Majā	enjoy
Majbūrī	limitation, restriction, no choice
Mālkan	mistress of the house
Maṁgnā	ask, demand
Man	mind (heart)
Mān	honour
Mārā	our
Mardoṁ	men
Mast	carefree, enjoy
Māsī	mother's sister
Maut	death
Mel-jol	compatible
Mil	got, found
Miljul-jānā	mix, assimilate
Milnā	mix, found, to meet
Miṭṭī	soil
Moṭu	big
Moṭi	big, elder (feminine)
Mujhe	me, I
Mukti	salvation
Muśkil	difficulty

N

Nā	no
Nahīṁ	no, don't
Nāl	with
Nām	name
Namaste	Indian form of greeting
Naṁd	husband's sister
Nāno	inferior
Narak	hell
Nasalvād	racism

Nasalvādī	racist
Naukrī	job
Naukrānī	servant
Navrātrī	Nine day celebration of female principle "Shakti" in the form of various Hindu Goddesses
Nīcā	low, below. inferior
Nikālnā	turn out

O

Ochu	small

P

Pāchṛ	backward
Pag	feet
Pagār	salary, income
Pahcān	identity, acquaintance
Pair	leg
Pairoṁ	on legs
Pānā	get, gain, achieve
Panāh/panoh	shelter, dependence
Pandit	priest
Pār	cross, other side
Paramparā	custom
Pāramparik	tradition
Pareśān	worried
Pareśānī	worry, problem
Pareśāniyāṁ	worries, problems, hardships
Parikśā	test
Paristhiti	circumstance
Parku -thāpaṇ	belongs to somebody else
Parmeśwar	Lord, God
Paṛtā/Paṛyā	to do
Parvāh	care, concern
Parvariś	upbringing
Patāh	knowledge, aware
Pati	husband
Pāyā	gain, got, achieved
Praṣād	offerings to God distributed to the devotees
Praśansā	praise
Pratighāt	revenge
Prem	love
Pūjā	worship
Pukārtā	calls
Punya	blessings, merit
Purānī	old
Purdāh	veil
Pūrṇa	complete
Pūro	fulfilled

R

Rāh	wait
Rahī	stay
Rāj	rule
Rakhe	to keep
Rehne/Rehvu	live, stay
Rīt	custom
Rīte	way
Rūp	feature, beauty

S

Śabad	words
Sabhā	assembly
Sabhyatā	culture
Sādhāraṇ	ordinary
Sah	tolerate, endure
Sahan	tolerance, patience
Sahānubhūti	sympathy, empathy
Sahārā/Sahāro	support, assistance
Saheli	friend
Sahī	right
Saho	bear, suffer, tolerate
Sakhtī	strict
Śaktī	strength
Salāh	advice, consult
Salwār	part of Punjabi dress (women's trousers)
Sāmān	alike, similar
Sāmagrī	items for worship
Samajh	understanding, knowledge
Samajhte	understand
Saṁbaṅdh	relations
Sambhāl	carefully, control
Sammān	honour, respect
Saṅg-sāth	with, together (in the neighbourhood)
Śāntī	peace
Saṅtoṣ	satisfaction, contentment
Saṅtuṣt	contented
Sanyās	ascetic, formal renunciation of all mundane ties (fourth stage of life)
Śaṛ	rot, spoilt
Śaram	shame
Sāri/Sāro	good
Śārīrik	bodily, physical
Śarmindā	ashamed
Śarmindagī	embarassment
Satāyā	torture, made to suffer, harassed
Sāth	with, together, companionship
Satsaṅg	religious songs
Satyanārāyaṇ	Hindu God
Sau	hundred
Sehnā	to bear, to tolerate, to suffer

Sevā	care, service
Si	is
Sīdhī-sādhī	simple, submissive
Smriti	tradition, law code
Śoṣad	exploitation
Sthal/Sthān	place, position
Śudra	low status Varna
Suḥkh	happiness, pleasure
Suḥkhī	happy
Surakśit	protected, secure
Suvidhāyeṁ	benefits, advantages, privileges
Swābhimān	self-respect, dignity
Swatantra	free, liberated
Swatantratā	freedom, liberation

T

Tākat	strength
Taklīf	problem
Tanāv	stress, tense
Taṅg	troubled, fed-up (tired)
Tarāh	like, type
Tarīke	style
Tazurbā	experience
Thāke	tired
Thā	was
Ṭhīk-ṭhāk	all right
Ṭhos	strong, tough
To	so

U

Ubhār	self-suportive
Updeś	preaching, message
Us	his/her
Uske	theirs
Utar	down, slide
Uṭhāte	pick up
Utsāh	excitement, enthusiasm

V

Vānaprastha	hermit (third stage of life)
Vāṅk	fail
Varnāśramadharma	duties pertaining to the four-fold division and four-fold stages of life
Vātāvaraṇ	atmosphere
Vicār	views, opinion
Videśī	foreign
Vidhis	rites
Vidhwā	widow
Virudh	against

Y

Yād	reminiscence, remember
Yāti	wandering ascetic